INDIAN ART

Vol. II



GUPTA ART

(A History of Indian Art in the Gupta Period 300-600 A. D.)

BY

The Late Prof. **VASUDEVA S. AGRAWALA**

CONTENTS

the late Author's writings except some simple captions and also certain notes making cross references (on behalf of the Author) to his other writings. In Appendices I and II are given two unpublished and somewhat incomplete notes of the Author on "*Devatārchana* : Worshipping Images in Temples" and on "Music" respectively; the second Appendix being revised and enlarged by material from his *Bṛihatkathāślokasaṁgraha* : *A Study* and the short paper in the *J. of the Music Academy*, Madras.

Notes to the text are placed at the end of each section. The excellent sketch of the Dhamekh Stūpa carving in **Textfig. 17** is by Shri Ramesh Chandra Sathi of Lucknow for which we are grateful to him. For most of the other line-drawings and sketches included in the text we are indebted to Shri Dinesh Pratap Singh of the Fine Arts College, Banaras Hindu University. The photographic illustrations reproduced are through the kind courtesy of the Archaeological Survey of India and the respective Museums owning the antiquities.

EDITORIAL PREFACE

The present book is brought out to serve as the second volume of Prof. V. S. AGRAWALA's *Indian Art* (Vol. I : *A History of Indian Art from the earliest times up to the third century A. D.*), Varanasi, 1965. Before his sad demise in 1966 Prof. Agrawala had planned to write on Gupta Art to be issued as a Second Volume to his *History* of the Indian Art. To fulfil this original project the publishers and the present editor had no other alternative than to bring out a new edition of Prof. V. S. Agrawala's earlier work *Gupta Art* (Lucknow, 1948)* in a revised and enlarged edition on the basis of the late Author's treatises on the subject and also the notes of his Class Lecturers taken by his post-graduate students at the Banaras Hindu University (from 1951 to 1966). Prof. Agrawala had a great fascination for the study of Gupta culture and arts.

The work as it is being published now is the present editor's *compilation* of the relevant portions of the writings of late Prof. V. S. Agrawala on the subject which have been collected and pieced together from the Author's following writings and Class Lectures :

1. "Gupta Art," *Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society* (=JUPHS.), vol. XVIII, pts. 1-2, July-December, 1945, pp. 101-134, with pls. I—XX. The same issued under separate cover, *Gupta Art*, Lucknow, 1948.
2. "Art in the Gupta Period," in Ch. XXII of *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*, pp. 446-471 (ed. R. C. Majumdar and A. S. Altekar).
3. "A Survey of Gupta Art and some Sculptures from Nāchnā Kuṭhārā and Khoh," *Lalit Kala*, No. 9, April 1961, pp. 16-26.
4. "Sculpture : Gupta Period (300—600 A. D.)," in his *Studies in Indian Art*, Varanasi, 1965, pp. 245-254.
5. "Rūpa-Sattra; Specimens of Gupta Period Sculpture in the Mathura Museum," *Mārg*, vol. V, No. 2, Bombay, 1952, pp. 45-50.
6. *The Heritage of Indian Art*, Delhi, 1964.
7. *Evolution of the Hindu Temple and Other Essays*, Varanasi, 1965.
8. *Masterpieces of Mathurā Sculpture*, Varanasi, 1965.

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* It earlier appeared in the form of a paper, JUPHS., vol. XVIII, pts. 1-2, 1945. Major portions of the same, though showing some modifications here and there, were included in *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*, Lahore, 1946, pp. 446-471 (ed. Majumdar and Altekar).

9. *Handbook of the Sculpture in the Curzon Museum of Archaeology, Muttra*, Allahabad, 1939.
10. *A Short Guide-book to the Archaeological Section of the Provincial Museum Lucknow*, Allahabad, 1940.
11. *Mathurā Museum Catalogue* :
    I. Buddha and Bodhisattva Images, JUPHS., XXI, 1948.
    II. Brāhmanical Images in Mathurā Art, JUPHS., XXII, 1949.
    III. Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras and other Miscellaneous Figures, JUPHS., XXIII, 1950.
    IV. Architectural Pieces, JUPHS., XXIV-XXV, 1951-52.
12. *Studies in Indian Art*, Varanasi, 1965, paper Nos. 31 to 39.
13. "Mathurā Terracottas," JUPHS., IX, July 1936.
14. "Rājghāṭ Terracottas," JUPHS., XIV, July 1941; JISOA., IX, 1941.
15. "Terracotta Figurines of Ahichchhatrā, District Bareilly, U. P.," *Ancient India*, No. 4, Calcutta, 1948.
16. "The Religious Significance of the Gupta Terracottas from Rang Mahal," *Lalit Kala*, No. 8, 1969.
17. "A Palace Amusement Scene of a Terracotta Panel from Mathurā," JISOA., X, 1942.
18. "Pottery Designs from Ahichchhatra," *Lalit Kala*, Nos. 3-4, 1956-1957, pp. 74—81.
19. "Brāhmanical Images in Mathurā Art," JISOA., 1937.
20. "Birth of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, Visual Representation of Madhyadeśa," JUPHS., XIV, July 1943.
21. *Sarnath*, Department of Archaeology, Delhi, 1956.
22. *Solar Symbolism of the Boar*, Varanasi, 1963.
23. *Vision in Long Darkness*, Varanasi, 1963.
24. *Indian Art*, vol. I, Varanasi, 1965, Ch. 13 : Indian Terracottas.
25. *Śiva-Mahādeva, The Great God*, Varanasi, 1966.
26. *The Deeds of Harsha*, Varanasi, 1969.
27. *Bṛihatkathāślokasaṁgraha : A Study*, Varanasi, 1974.
28. "Some Early References to Musical Rāgas and Instruments," *The Journal of the Music Academy*, Madras, XXIII, 1952, pp. 113-14.

29. M. A. Class Lectures for the academic sessions 1951-52, 1953-54, 1956-57 and 1963-64.

At places the editor has made minor changes of co-ordination between sentences. But wherever independent sentences or remarks are added by him by way of providing some informative or linking material such *additions* are put within bigger brackets [...].

Inspite of the best efforts on part of the editor, the reader will find some overlapping or repetition in several sections. But these are certainly not to be regretted as in each case any reductions would have not been fluent. The descriptions of illustrated sculptures and monuments are mostly from

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I

INTRODUCTORY

The surviving records of Gupta civilisation present to us a brilliant picture of advancement in literature, religion, philosophy, social and human ideals, and none the least in art, which ensemble is a mirror of all that was graceful, elegant, sweet and noble in that culture. The glories of the Gupta age have been made permanent through the visible creations of its arts. For no other period of Indian history is the cultural material so rich and so amply documented in its literature and art as for this age. The period of three centuries, circa 325—650 A. D., witnessed an unprecedented artistic activity in India revealed through some of the most beautiful creations of art. Following a period of strenuous effort art now attained a higher status and form with the tremendous outburst of creative activity that gave birth to a national style of art distinguished by common characteristics and activity from numerous centres.

Under the mighty and illustrious emperors of the Gupta dynasty—Samudragupta (c. 325—375 A. D.), Chandragupta Vikramāditya (c. 375—413 A. D.), Kumāragupta (413—455 A. D.), Skandagupta (455—467 A. D.)—Indian literature, religion, art and culture attained the pinnacle of their glory, and spread not only to every nook and corner of India, but also outside, towards the north across the Himālayas into Central Asia, and towards the south-east across the ocean into the islands of Indonesia or what was then known as *Dvīpāntara*. This cultural efflorescence—accompanied by an economic prosperity—was the direct result of a spiritual earnestness the like of which had seldom been seen before in India. It was an age of all-round perfection, in domestic life, in administration, in literature, as seen in the works of Kālidāsa, in art creations and in religion and philosophy as exemplified in the widespread Bhāgavata movement which identified itself with an intensive cult of beauty.

Various fine arts that constituted the life-breath of the people's culture, viz., sculpture, painting, poetry, drama, dance and music, all came to have the stamp of a new aestheticism that demanded for an essential concord of material and moral perfections.

The permanent spiritual values of life had been cast into an aesthetic mould that we call art. Different forms of art, viz., sculpture, painting and terracotta attained a maturity, a balance and a naturalness of expression that have remained unexcelled. In this Golden Age of Indian history—as the Gupta period is rightly styled—men and women were deeply art-conscious; they evinced a passionate desire for beautiful forms and shared in a universal activity to create what was noble and elevating. Some of our most beautiful monuments representing the very acme of India's artistic achievement are a cultural heritage of the Gupta period. Amongst them the immortal Ajaṇṭā frescoes take precedence.

This all-embracing artistic activity covered almost the whole country. New provincial centres, as Mathurā, Sārnāth, Pāṭaliputra, became the seat of the new intellectual and spiritual movement, and the economic prosperity of the age gave refreshing outlook on life and culture. The *Divyāvadāna* pictures the continent of Jambūdvīpa[1] as the land of populous and peaceful cities teeming with happy millions, of vast and numerous capitals, towns and villages separated by intervals of space hardly greater than a cock's flight.

Under ideal conditions of social and political life art and culture flourished as never before. The contemporary citizen lived and moved in an abiding consciousness of beauty. His soul deeply moved by the surrounding beauty of forms recreated the same effect of charm in the visible symbols of art. Richly ornamented temples and sculptures, images and terracottas, numerous as they are, impress us with the high quality of their workmanship. Many details of Gupta life are preserved in art, and great and small objects of stone and clay besides their moving loveliness also appear as documents of social culture.

Elegance and balance are the outstanding features of Gupta art. There is nothing great or small which the hands of the Gupta artist touched and did not adorn. The great frescoes concieved and executed on an epic scale, and the charming and lyrical pieces of smaller terracottas, both were the results of a common art inspiration through which the spirit of renaissance made itself eloquent. In this revival the house and the monastery both played their part and vied, as it were, with each other in creating and enshrining lovely objects, both as

articles of daily use and as images of deities for worship. The importance of art and drama, dance and music in the life-scheme of a people is always a fascinating subject worthy of study, but seldom is its value greater than for the Gupta period.

The art creations of this Golden Age are expressions of the spiritual harmony and blissful realisation that were the hall-mark of the superior motifs of thought and life comprised in Gupta culture. There was a passionate desire to cultivate the beauty of the body in all its aspects, e. g. in the dressing of hair as seen in the charming styles of coiffure both in paintings and sculpture, in the elegant diaphanous drapery which aims at revealing the hidden beauty of the figure, the beautiful ornament on the head, bust and limbs that pressed into service glittering gold and jewellery to enhance physical charm, but with a restraint that is the sign of high nobility. Dance and music constituted the life-breath of the people's culture who regarded them as superior to even religious meditation :—

> Nṛityatāṁ gāyatāṁ chaiva nānāvādyaṁ prakurvatām /
> Yathā saṁtushyate devo na dhyānādyairiti śrutam //
>
> (*Mbh.* Jaiminīyāśvamedha Parva, 12.22)

"When the people dance and sing and play on their several musical instruments, they make the deity happier than by their meditational practices— thus have we heard."

This was the radiating spirit of buoyant life in the Gupta period. Verily, aesthetic culture was wedded to spiritual culture during the Golden Age, as never before and after.

Broadly speaking, two major art realisations are discernible during this period. The one relates to the aesthetic distinction of all art creations. It was so to say a unique epoch of universal cult of Beauty (which the contemporary literature refers to as *Rūpa-sattra* or *Lāvaṇya-sattra*).[2] The second, however, relates to structural procedures, i. e., the building of Hindu temples in regular stone masonry. It soon emerged to be an event of utmost significance in the life of the people. The structural temple became a regular feature of the popular artistic movement which gave rise to the perfection of the image on the one hand, and to the full development of the decorative motif and symbols on the other.

Another aspect of Gupta art is its wide geographical range. From Dah Parbatiā on the Brahmaputra in Assam to Mīrpur Khās in Sindh, Gupta monuments are scattered all over the country-side. Great centres of the art include Sārnāth, Mathurā, Pāṭaliputra, Devagaḍh, Bhītargāon, Nāgod, Bhūmarā, Eraṇ, Udayagiri, Māndasor, Raṅg-Mahal, Ajaṇṭā and the ancient Gandhāra province, where a great mass of remarkable sculpture, in stone and in stucco or baked clay, was produced. Both sculptures and structural monuments are widely distributed deriving their inspiration from the same fountain-head of the new art movement, and characterised by the same elements of decoration, architectural principles and elegance of form. Outside India, the school exercised far-reaching influence on the art of China and the Far East, moulding them into something of an all-Asian pattern.

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1. 'Tena kha'u samayenāsmin jambūdvīpe...nagara-sahasrāṇi...ṛiddhāni sphītāni kshemāṇi subhikshāṇyākīrṇa-bahujanamanushyāṇi / apidānīṁ jambūdvīpakā akarā abhūvanna-śulkā atarapaṇyāḥ kṛishisampannāḥ saumyā janapadā babhūvuḥ kukkuṭasampāta-mātrāścha grāmanigamarāshṭra rājadhānyo babhūvuḥ' / *Divyāvadāna*, p. 316.
2. Varāhamihira, *Bṛihatsaṁhitā* ch. 105; *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* I. 154.36 'ihaiva kṛitvā dharmajña rūpasattraṁ mahāphalam ; chapter I. 155 called *Rūpasattravarṇana* describes the observances for this vow of Beauty.

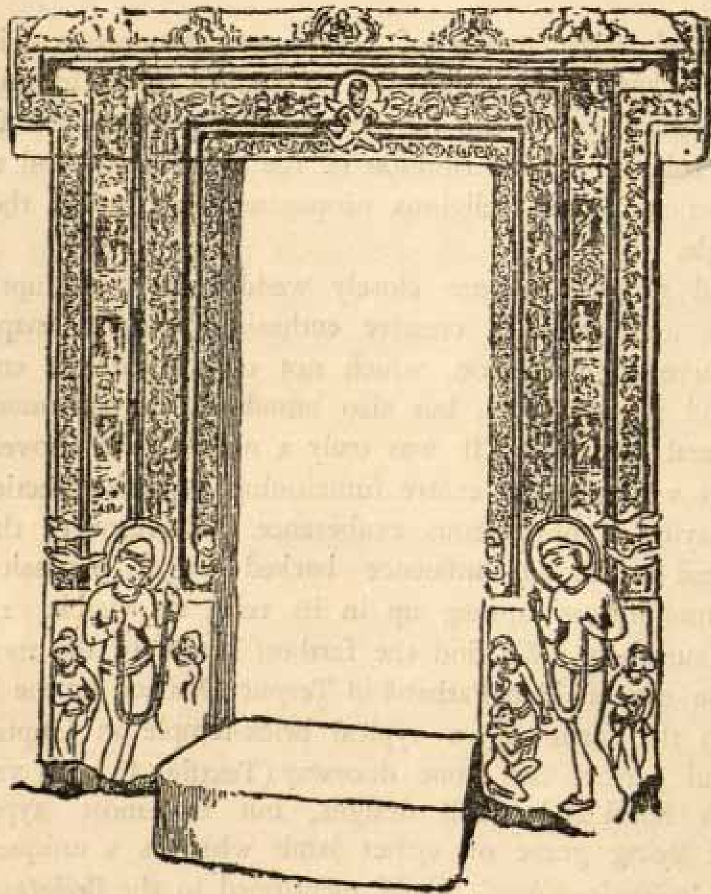
II

GEOGRAPHICAL DISPERSAL OF GUPTA ART

A comprehensive survey of Gupta art monuments with reference to the sites where they originated is indispensable for understanding the national character of the movement. The geographical factor played a dominant rôle in the distribution of the monuments, and the pulsating forces of commerce and religious propaganda determined their character and magnitude.

Art and religion became closely wedded in the Gupta period to command an unprecedented creative enthusiasm and to map out movements of universal dimension, which not only filled the entire country from one end to the other, but also inundated the surrounding regions in a peripheral overflow. It was truly a nation-wide movement in the sphere of art with many a centre functioning in each direction and each region displaying a spontaneous exuberance. Wheresoever the Bhāgavata religion spread its benign influence backed by an impassioned literary appeal, art monuments sprang up in its train as visible reflectors of the popular surcharge. We find the farthest limits of the movement preserved in the east at Dah Parbatiā in Tezpur District on the Brahmaputra in Assam, in the form of a typical brick-temple in Gupta style. Its most beautiful part is the stone doorway (Textfig. 1) with vertical bands covered with floral and scroll designs, but the most typical feature is a pair of flying geese on either jamb which is a unique representation of the '*māṅgalya-vihaga*' motif mentioned in the *Bṛihatsaṁhitā* (56.15) of Varāhamihira. The influence of the art of Madhyadeśa is patent in every detail of sculpture and architecture, whether the monument was raised in the east or in the west. The monuments were sited on the geographical routes of commerce and general communication and it is easy to discover the principles of planning to link each region with the other. To the west of the Brahmaputra, the country of Puṇḍravardhana, now comprised by Raṅgpur, Dīnājapur, Bogrā, Rājashāhī, Māldā, etc., has yielded a large number of Gupta sites and antiquities. Vaṅga (East Bengāl), Samataṭa (the Gangetic Delta), Suhma (West Bengāl called Rāḍha) and Puṇḍra (North Bengāl), these were clearly marked

divisions of the Gupta empire under Samudragupta, each fostering a local school of art, but all together bearing the hall-mark of Gupta style, especially in the refined creations of the terracotta figurines. This rich and fertile land of Vārendra lying between the Brahmaputra on the



Textfig. 1. Stone doorframe. Dah Parbatiā, Assam. 5th century.

east and the Kosī on the west and watered by the parallel streams of the Mahānandā, Apunarbhavā, Ātreyī and Karatoyā (from west to east) was once the cradle of Gupta culture, from which wave after wave travelled via the sea and overland routes to Burma, Malaya and Indonesia, influencing the art and culture of those peoples.

The next crucible of Gupta art and culture was the region of Aṅga and Mithilā with flourishing centres at Champā and Vaiśālī, the latter being an important centre on the trade-route north of the Gaṅgā, and

also a political capital receiving the special attention of the royal house owing to its alliance with the Lichchhavis. Vaiśālī, the modern Basāḍh in Muzaffarpur District, has produced a large number of the inscribed clay sealings and terracotta plaques. On the Gaṅga was situated Pāṭaliputra, the capital of the empire, known far and near as the 'City of Flowers', and famous throughout Jambūdvīpa for the fashions and fancies of its citizens, whose aesthetic zeal is preserved in numerous sculptures and clay-figurines from old sites in Patnā, viz., Kumrāhār and Bulandībāgh. Recently A. S. Altekar exposed a terracotta plaque of unusual quality showing the figure of a rake (*viṭa*) with a challenging look and vigorous expression (Ill. 35) so natural to the leader of the courtesan's quarters of Pāṭaliputra. A subsidiary arm of the artistic activity of this period extended towards the south of the Gaṅgā up to Nālandā and Rājgir and thence to the west through Gayā towards the Sone Valley covering the Uchchakalpa territory of the Parivrājaka Mahārājas and also what was then known as the Āṭavikarājya, as well as the fertile valleys of the Betwā, Sindh and Chambal. There is a cluster of Gupta sites in this region, the main commercial routes being all along dotted with art centres as prominent landmarks or stages of journey. The long route connected Magadha with Ujjayinī, intersected towards the east by the Śrāvastī-Kauśāmbī-Chedi sector and towards the west by the Mathurā-Vidiśā sector, all three taking within their lap almost all the principal monuments of this virtual courtyard in the mansion of Gupta culture. The valley of the Sone and its upper feeder Johilā[3] was an important highway towards the Chedi country or Jabalpur District, and the eastern line of Gupta monuments stood along the Kosam-Jabalpur line of communication. This was an ancient route from Mauryan times and the modern railway line follows it. A few miles from Satnā, in the former Nāgod State, was built the great Stūpa of Bharhut in Aśokan times, later enlarged by stone railings and gateways. The Gupta architects built near Nāgod the small Śiva temple at Shaṅkargaḍh. Uchāharā (ancient *Uchchakalpa*) (see Ill. 10) is a station on this line, and the beautiful Śiva temple of Bhūmarā (Ill. 11) is only six miles from here. Another important Gupta centre was Nāchnā-Kuṭhārā, only about ten miles from Bhūmarā in the erstwhile Ajaygaḍh State. At Nachnā-Kuṭhārā there were two Gupta temples, one the early so-called Pārvatī temple

(Textfigs. 68-9) and the other later, dedicated to Śiva. At Kāri-Talāi was also built a Gupta shrine, just midway the headquarters of the Tons on the left and the Sone on the right. Down below on the route is Tigowā where a beautiful Gupta temple has been found. South of Tigowā only a few miles distant is the ancient site of Rūpnāth where Aśoka had put one of his edicts. At the upper end of the sector just after Prayāga have been found the Gupta sites at Bhīṭā (ancient *Sahajāti*) and Gaḍhwā (ancient *Bhaṭṭagrāma*) ; at the latter place sculptural remains of a very magnificent Gupta temple (Ill. 65-67) of the time of Kumāragupta had been found by Cunningham. Besides stone there were also brick temples with moulded pillars, pilasters and reliefs. Terracottas and moulded bricks formed a very popular media of aesthetic expression during the Gupta and post-Gupta times.

Along the western vertical sector connecting Mathurā with Bhilsā, marked by the river Betwā, the number of Gupta monuments is large enough ; those at Devagaḍh, Udayagiri, Sānchī and Eraṇ being famous. The Daśāvatāra temple at Devagaḍh is a veritable gem of Gupta sculpture and architecture. Its carved reliefs and the decorative doorway are inspired works of great artists, in which one is face to face with the equipoised and restrained power of their aesthetic creations. The cluster of monuments on the Udayagiri hill, only five miles from Bhilsā (now Vidiśā), preserves celebrated works of Gupta carvers.

The small fertile valley between the Betwā and its tributary the Bīnā was adorned by its Bhāgavata citizens lavishly through the erection of a number of temples. The chief centre was Eraṇ (ancient *Airikiṇa*) on the left bank of the Vīṇā (Bīnā) river as an important stage on the route from the east towards Ujjayinī, and from the north linking Mathurā with Vidiśā. The temples dedicated to Varāha, Vishṇu, and Narasiṁha are typical Bhāgavata monuments with a wealth of gigantic sculptures and beautiful reliefs, and also the monolithic Vaishṇava pillar, 43 feet high, set up by the two devotees of Vishṇu, Mātṛivishṇu and Dhanyavishṇu, in the reign of Budhagupta in A. D. 485. The small Śiva temple at Mukundarā just on the point of the mountainous pass between Koṭāh and Jhālāwar is in simple early Gupta style but charming in its carved reliefs.

The resourceful builders in this period evolved the technique of brick shrines conceived from top to bottom in terms of moulded courses and terracotta plaques loaded with religious and secular scenes as well

as floral and geometrical designs of infinite variety. From Shorkoṭ in the Panjāb to Mīrpur Khās in Sindh, and from Bhītargāon in Kānpur District to Sīrpur in Rāipur District, there are hundreds of Gupta brick temples of which an account as yet remains an unwritten chapter in the glorious records of the Golden Age. Cunningham wrote about the Shorkoṭ finds, "The moulded bricks are the most characteristic features of all the old cities in the plains of the Panjab .... The variety of patterns is infinite and some of them are very bold and effective."[4] Cunningham obtained similar material at Bhavanni, ten miles from Montgomery on the Rāvī,[5] at Gulamba and Asraur.[6] A very large number of such ornamental bricks was obtained by Hiranand Shastri from Sahet-Mahet, and typical specimens are still *in situ* fixed in the birck Stūpa at Śrāvastī. This was the technique of broadcasting aesthetic culture by means of transferring geometrical, floral, animal and human patterns to essential building material like bricks and baked pilasters. Its possibilities were fully exploited, as evidenced by the large number of monuments distributed over an extensive area. As already stated, the Dah Parbatiā temple in the Tejpur District of Assam was made of bricks, with terracotta plaques discovered around the stone doorframe which have been considered to be the best examples of terracotta art known at present. The style was flourishing in Bengāl as demonstrated by the finds from ancient sites in Dīnājapur, Raṅgpur, Rājashāhī, Bogrā and Māldā, and last but not the least at Pahārpur where the tradition as developed later has preserved a veritable feast of ornamentation in the thousands of plaques fixed in the temple. Continuing through Bihār and Uttar Pradesh, the line of monuments extends to the Raṅg Mahal region near Sūratgaḍh in Bīkāner, and then crossing the Thār-Pārkar desert to the Stūpa of Mīrpur Khās in Sindh. A similar phenomenon was witnessed in the Fatehpur District of Uttar Pradesh where the banks of the Gaṅgā are dotted by numerous Gupta temples in brick and terracotta like the magnificent fane at Bhītargāon in Kānpur District. The rich merchants who had amassed wealth by the riverine trade along the Gaṅgā donated it to founding many religious establishments and art monuments in their territory. The westernmost extension of this movement is embodied in the Great Stūpa at Mīrpur Khās. The selection of its site was quite happy, being on the junction of two vital commercial arteries, viz. the one transversing north Gujarāt

[with the recently exposed great brick-built Buddhist Stūpa at Devnīmorī, adjoining to the later Gupta site of Śāmalājī in the Sābarkāṅṭhā District] and south Rājasthān to Pāṭala in Sindh. The same route passes through Bārmer to Hyderabad (Sindh) at present, but in ancient times it had much greater importance as the connecting link on the one hand between the marts of Barygaza (*Bharukachchha*) on the mouth of the Narmadā and of Ujjayinī in Mālwā, which was the richest trading town in the whole of Asia and rightly celebrated as the *Sārvabhauma Nagara*[7] or the City International in the Gupta age, and on the other the Central Asian markets, from which flowed an uninterrupted stream of commodities along the two routes on both banks of the Indus which were picked up at Pāṭala. These routes are mentioned with their two sectors both in the Pāli and Sanskrit-Buddhist literature, and the occupation of Sindh by the Indo-Greeks and their successors the Śaka Satraps of Ujjain was the outcome of wars waged to control the rich trading prize of the Dvārāvatī-Bāhlīka route. The magnificent Stūpa at Mīrpur Khās shone as the visible symbol of the double glories of this route. Very naturally its decorative motifs and figure sculpture (see Textfigs. 78-80) display the art influences of both Gandhāra and Mālwā which were its two feeders.

We have seen how certain areas received a special share of the visible fruit of this aesthetic creativity. Owing to historical reasons the largest number of well preserved monuments is found in Madhya Pradesh at present, but at one time the cradle-land of Uttar Pradesh was enriched by temples and buildings in Gupta style on an extensive scale. Sārnāth, Rājghāṭ, Kosam, Bhīṭā, Gaḍhwā, Sahet-Mahet, Bilsaḍ (Farukhābād District), Saṅkisā, Atranjī Kheṛā (Eṭā District), Kudarkoṭ (ancient *Gavīdhumat* in Eṭāwāh District), Bhītargāon, Ahichchhatrā and Mathurā—these and many other sites have produced valuable material of Gupta art in the form of temples, Stūpas, sculptures, architectural pieces, terracotta plaques and figurines, bricks, pottery, beads, etc. These antiquarian objects may have been casually observed and even illustrated, but have not yet been the subject of an overall study to demonstrate the extent and quality of the great art fostered in the Gupta period. In Uttar Pradesh, Mathurā and Sārnāth gave birth to two local styles of great vitality and beauty which exercised far-reaching influences on the art of the northwest and Central Asia and China through the overland route on the one hand, and on the art of Burma, Malaya and Indonesia on the other.

In the Panjāb, Gupta relics have not yet been systematically surveyed. But it is important to mention the Jaina temple at Murti, near Choā Suidān Shāh in the Salt Range which was visited by Sir Aurel Stein in the old town of Siṁhapura, of which the remaining antiquities are preserved in the Lahore Museum. The other sites include those of Paṭṭan-Munārā with its brick tower, of the Gupta period, Bhera (Shāhpur District), Sangla-tiba, Shorkoṭ, Sunet (Ludhiānā District), and Khokrā Koṭ (Rohtak District). The time is now ripe for an intensive search which is likely to make a substantial addition to our knowledge. This survey ought to be extended to Gujarāt, Saurāshṭra, Bombay, Berār, Hyderābad, Āndhra, Tamilnāḍu, Mysore and Malābār on the mainland of India, and to Ceylon and the islands of greater India, which received in full measure strong influences of Indian art as it flourished in this age. As literary and religious heritage was transported across the seas so also vital styles of art and architecture were borrowed by the colonies from the Indian homeland.

3. Ancient *Jyotīrathā*, mentioned by Kālidāsa, *Raghuvaṁśa* (VII. 36). See my article, "River Jyotīrathā in the *Raghuvaṁśa*," *J. of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, vol. IX, No. 4 (June, 1960), pp. 403-6.
4. Alexander Cunningham, *A. S. R.*, for the year 1872-73, vol. V, p. 100, pl. XXIX, 1-8.
5. Ibid., pp. 104-5.
6. Ibid., pp. 112-4, pl. XXXV, figs. 1-12.
7. Cf. *Pādatāḍitaka* of Śyāmilaka 21. 9: my *Chaturbhāṇī* (Bombay 1959), p. 162.

III

ICONOGRAPHY

We know from the Purāṇas the extent to which cosmogonic myths and legends had been developed reflecting the numerous patterns of Hindu religious thought. The Gupta artist was called upon to give visible expression to the Paurāṇic concepts through the medium of stone, clay or painting. This he accomplished with extraordinary success by means of some simple but profound formulas of iconography and sculpture, like Vishṇu resting on the cosmic serpent Ananta Sesha, or in architecture like the beautiful but highly symbolical doorway of the Gupta temples. The period of the first three centuries of the Christian era was the epoch of formative ideas and of new experiments in the sphere of art and iconography. From the point of view of iconography, the Gupta age marks an advance over the preceding Kushāṇa period. In the Kushāṇa art at Mathurā the earliest forms of Buddhist iconography appear in the images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The discovery of the image of the Buddha had opened up a new vista for the growth of a complex pantheon of numerous Bodhisattvas and attendant deities. This age was also the formative period for the images of the principal Brāhmanical gods and goddesses.[8] As a result we find quite a number of Hindu deities, such as Vishṇu, Śiva, Brahmā, Indra, Kārttikeya, Lakshmī, Sarasvatī, Durgā, Saptamātṛikā, etc., portrayed in the Kushāṇa period. Their forms, attributes, accessory details, vehicles, decoration, etc., gradually came to be fixed in the course of several centuries, so that by the time of the Guptas the artists and the sculptors found themselves in possession of well-defined conventions and iconographic canons. But the artists were still feeling their way and conventions were elastic. Thus not only they followed conventionalised formulas (*dhyāna*), but they also worked on an expanded pantheon in which the number of gods and goddesses and their *līlās* greatly increased. This heritage of well understood forms of art enabled them to handle the complicated legends and myths of the many forms of Vishṇu and Śiva with an easy mastery. For example, Vishṇu is represented holding different attributes in his four hands, and also in the guise of his various incarnations (*avatāras*) of Trivikrama, Varāha,

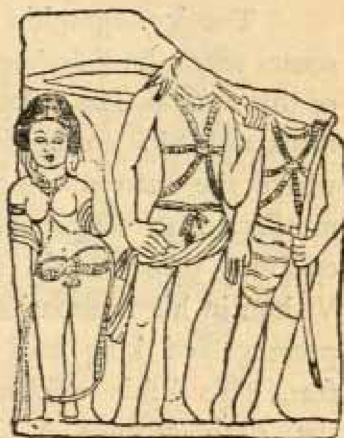
Nṛisiṁha, Rāma and Kṛishṇa. The form of Śeshaśāyī Vishṇu is known in several examples, the most outstanding being the one at Devagaḍh (Ill. 55). The deities Kārttikeya, Indra, Brahmā and Śiva-Pārvatī appear in their developed iconographic forms in the upper part of this panel while Gaṇapati and Kubera on its enclosing jambs. One is impressed with the genuine simplicity in which grand mythical conceptions of religious and metaphysical import are visualised by the engraver. The sculptural representations of the epic stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the



Textfig. 2. Rāma and Lakshmaṇa practising archery.



Textfig. 3. Resurrection of Ahalyā by Rāma.



Textfig. 4. Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sīta on their way to forest.

Rāmāyaṇa scenes from the plinth of Devagaḍh temple.

Kṛishṇa cycle are represented with effective success in the Devagaḍh temple[9] belonging to this epoch. In the Brāhmanical iconography at Mathurā during the Kushāṇa period Kṛishṇa is conspicuous by his absence, except on a relief (M. M. 1344) bearing a scene which Daya Ram Sahni interpreted as showing Kṛishṇa's father Vasudeva crossing the Yamunā in spate in order to transport the new-born babe to the safety of Gokula.[10] At Devagaḍh, on the other hand, we find the details of the Kṛishṇa legend completely developed, and a few of the many panels bear scenes of Kṛishṇa's birth showing the lady Devakī handing over the child to her husband ; Vasudeva, moving out to Gokula with the child ; Nanda and Yaśodā holding Balarāma and Kṛishṇa in their laps and enjoying the bliss of a quiet rural retreat in the midst of their cows (Ill. 2), Kṛishṇa kicking at the milk cart on which pots of milk have

toppled over (Ill. 4), and finally Kṛishṇa seizing the demon Kaṁsa by the hair. On a very beautiful panel we find another homely scene showing Kṛishṇa, Rukmiṇī and Sudāmā. The emaciated Brāhmaṇa is leaning on his crooked staff and in front of him stands Krishṇa, an elegant figure with the effect of his dignity heightened by the very elaborate and gorgeous coiffure spreading round his head, and the lady Rukminī steeped in astonishment at the measureless bounty of her husband in fulfilling the wishes of his friend.[11]

The iconographic wealth of this period is further illustrated in the scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* which once adorned the plinth (see Textfigs. 2–4) of this temple. The redemption of Ahalyā; the pilgrimage of Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sītā to the forest; their visit to the hermitage of sage Agastya where the matron Lopāmudrā welcomed Rāma's sweet wife; and the mutilation of Sùrpaṇakhā by Lakshmaṇa (Ill. 3) are some of the major episodes preserved in these panel reliefs.[12] On a slab still *in situ* we find Vishṇu in his incarnation of Trivikrama assuming a colossal form in the presence of king Bali who is thrown in consternation by this miraculous feat. This lithic evidence of the iconographic development by about the sixth century A. D. is in agreement with the literary tradition as recorded in the works of Kālidāsa and a little later in the works of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. The ten incarnations of Vishṇu with his principal legendary exploits (*Raghuvaṁśa*) XIII 5 ; the cycle of the boyhood romance of Kṛishṇa in his cowherd form (*Gopaveshaya Vishṇoḥ, Meghadūta* I. 14), and the classical legends of Śiva e. g. his victory over Kāmadeva, the god of love, exploits over Gajāsura and ohter demons, and honeymoon dalliances with Pārvatī, present a fully developed picture of the religious myths of these gods as known to the poets of the Gupta age. Many of these scenes occur in the sculpture of this period, e. g. the agitation of the Kailāsa by Rāvaṇa is seen on a Mathurā relief [13] showing the giant king with a single head exerting his full might to bring about the Himālayan upheaval. The wavy lines and the reticulated breaks in the ridges of the Kailāsa express the strain which it suffered and show the truth of the lines in the *Meghadūta* : "Of the Kailāsa whose ridges suffered a shaking of their joints when it was tilted by the arms of the ten-headed king."[14] The Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva represents another happy feature of Gupta iconography. Although already conceived in

the Kushāṇa period,[15] the blended image of half-male and half-female form of the deity was perfected with masterly skill by the sculptors of the Gupta epoch.

The Ardhanārīśvara form[16] stands out as the most patent symbol of the synthesis achieved in this golden age when a wide spirit of tolerance and harmony was prevailing all round. We see this in the amity between the Brāhmaṇas and the Buddhists, the concord between thought and action, the spirit of approximation between the divine and the human worlds. The last is reflected in a couplet of Kālidāsa describing the city of Ujjayinī as a charming cross-section of heaven transferred to the earth, or in the Gupta emperors' claims in their coin legends to the ideal of conquering the earth by their valour and heaven by their good deeds. In the domain of art also we find this characteristic stamp of harmony and balance expressed in the combination of physical beauty with a higher religious purpose governing objects of art. For exquisite charm the Gupta specimens of painting and sculpture hardly leave anything to be desired. The inherent aesthetic appeal is usually present, and in addition we find that art stands integrated to a complete scheme of life inspired by an over-powering religious purpose. The rich fresco paintings of Ajaṇṭā, Bāgh and Sigiriyā, and the images and sculptured reliefs in numerous temples derive their full importance from this outstanding factor.



Textfig. 5. Ardhanārīśvara head. Stone, Mathurā

The spirit of religious tolerance is also manifest in the equal emphasis on the worship of Śiva and Vishṇu in this period. In the *Raghuvaṁśa* and the *Kumārasambhava*, Kālidāsa apportions his devotion equally between them. The number of the Gupta temples consecrated to the worship of Śiva and Vishṇu seems to be equally distributed and although the emperors held aloft the glory of the Garuḍa-standard (*Garuḍadhvaja*) their devotion to Śiva was not less deep. Some of the most beautiful Śiva images like the Śivaliṅgas from Khoh (Ill. 8), Uchāharā (Ill. 10) and Bhūmarā (Ill. 11) are from the Gupta period. Both the Liṅga form and the human image of Śiva existed in the Kushāṇa period, the latter occurring on the coin types also, but their blending as evolved in the Ekamukhī Śivaliṅgas was a characteristic feature of Gupta iconography. A fragmentary sculpture from Nāchnā Kuṭhārā depicts Mahānaṭa Śiva (Ill. 9), which is the earliest representation of the Tāṇḍava motif so far known in Indian art and belongs to the early Gupta period.

The worship of Vishṇu which had already spread in the Kushāṇa period round about Mathurā, received a fresh impetus and Vishṇu images became much more common in the Gupta age. In Vishṇu temples the sectarian image occupied the same importance and central position as the image of the Buddha occupied in a Buddhist Chaitya-hall. The Vishṇu image in the Devagaḍh temple and the Buddha figure in the Ajaṇṭā cave-temple occupied a parallel position. Mathurā now seems to have become the most catholic centre of religion and art where temples of Vishṇu, Śiva and Buddha flourished side by side. A magnificent Brāhmanical temple dedicated to Vishṇu stood at the site of Kaṭrā Keśavadeva where there was also a Buddhist Vihāra in the reign of Chandragupta II.[17] The great Varāha image at Udayagiri (c. 400 A. D.) is a monument to the genius of the Gupta sculptors (Ill. 12, Textfig. 9). On his right tusk the god has supported a woman personifying Pṛithivī, the Earth goddess raised from the depths of the primeval sea. Kālidāsa makes an appropriate reference to Vishṇu redeeming the earth from cosmic convulsions (*Raghuvaṁśa* XIII. 8). The image with the conspicuous garland looped round the arms and the body set up a type later on adopted on the coins known as 'Ādivarāha-drammas'. The two flanking scenes are of unusual significance, representing the birth of the twin rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā, their confluence at Prayāga and the final merging into the ocean (Textfig. 6).[18] The whole scene is permeated with a lyrical feeling,

and probably conveys an ideal representation of the Middle Country, the Madhyadeśa, which was the heart of the culture-empire founded by the Guptas. Its symbols were the twin river-goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, standing on their respective vehicles, the *makara* and the tortoise. It is only in Gupta art as in literature of this period that the two rivers make their appearance for the first time in the scheme of temple architecture, and we cannot but infer that Kālidāsa making a pointed reference to them as attendants of the temple deity is referring to a principal feature of contemporary art : "The goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā assumed visible forms and with *chaurīs* in their hands took up positions as attendants of the great god."[19] This characteristic feature is illustrated most artistically on the doorway of the Devagaḍh temple. Detached images of the two river goddesses also occur in this period.



Textfig. 6. The Descent of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. Udayagiri. Rock-cut relief.

From Mathurā, we have one of the rarest images of Vishṇu, an unparalleled specimen of the Brāhmanical art of this age for its serene spiritualised expression of the face. Originally the figure (Ill. 13) was four-armed and traces of the same are still visible in the bifurcating lines on the arm-stumps. Some of the characteristic features of decoration on this figure are the elaborate crown on the head with pearl-festoons (*mauktikajāla*), a lion-face emitting pearl-strings in the apex of the crown, a *makarikā* ornament consisting of two addorsed alligator-heads, a *chintāmaṇi* jewel set in deep-cut foliated scroll, frizzled hair falling loose on each shoulder, extended ear-lobes with rings, single pearl-necklace of graded pearls adorned with a cylindrical bead of sapphire in the centre, a feature to which both Kālidāsa and Bāṇa make repeated reference.[20] The figure also wears under the single pearl-string a clustered necklace of crescent shape formed by a number of intertwining pearl strings, armlets bearing the design of a dancing peacock's canopy, a *yajñopavīta* of double chain with a serpent head carved at one end of

the knot (*nāga-yajñopavīta*), a long *vaijayantī*-garland and also creased and clinging loin-cloth held by a girdle knotted in front.

Gupta statuary also shows for the first time images of the cosmic form of Vishṇu combining a human head with that of a boar and a lion.[21]



Textfig. 7. Mahā-Vishṇu with Nṛisiṁha and Varāha heads. From Mathurā. 5th cent. A. D.

These are images of Nṛisiṁha-Varāha Vishṇu from Mathurā, which Coomaraswamy takes to be an important document equally of art and iconography.[22] The arrangement of the boar and lion faces is variable on right and left shoulders. A different form of Vishṇu's cosmic aspect (*Viśvarūpa*) also appears in this period in which the central human figure is surrounded by a number of radiating heads, e. g. eight-armed figure on the great architrave from Gaḍhwā (Ill. 66;[23] also a recently found figure on a relief from Mathurā), such cosmic forms seem to reflect the Purusha-Sūkta conception of the myraid-headed deity.

The attributes of Vishṇu, *śaṅkha*, *chakra*, etc., figure in their natural form in Kushāṇa sculpture, but in Gupta images are personified as *āyudha-purushas*. Sometimes the symbols occur both in their natural and human forms. These figures are generally dwarfish as compared with

the tall stature of the main figure, a fact true in the case of the Buddha and Jaina statues also. Kālidāsa confirms the attendant figures being *vāmana*, 'short-statured', and says that each was marked with its respective symbol (*Raghu.*, X. 60).[24]



Textfig. 8. Bust of Piṅgala, Sūrya's attendant. C. 5 th cent. A.D.
From Mathurā. Lucknow Museum.

Sūrya images of ancient Indian type with a chariot of four horses are known in the early art of Bodhagayā[25] and Anantagumphā (Udaigiri-Khaṇḍagiri)[26]. A new type of Sūrya clad in Northern dress (*Udīchyavesha*) and wearing long buskined boots became the usual feature in Kushāṇa images influenced by the Magian sun worship from Persia. The Persian influence is even more strongly marked in the Gupta images not only of the sun god, but also of his two attendants Daṇḍa and Piṅgala (Textfig. 8), the latter a pot-bellied figure holding a pen and an inkpot.[27]

At Khair Khāneh[28] near Kabul, J. Hackin discovered a marble image of Sūrya dressed like a Sassanian king and wearing a round apron-like tunic fringed with pearls (Ill. 23). The Sassanian kings had a special liking for pearls set in the dress. Bāṇa also refers to the fashion of pearl-spangled tunics worn by kings in the train of Harsha (*tāramuktāphalopachīyamāna-vārabāṇa*).[29] Some of the statues bearing close Sassanian influence lead us to infer that the intercourse between India and Persia in the Gupta-Sassanian epoch was much more intimate than is often imagined. A life-size bust (D.1, Mathurā Museum)[30] wearing a kulah cap (Skt. *khola*) with a crescent and globule symbol, spiral curls of hair, a tight beard band, a bejewelled cuirass and a belted coat represents a figure in Sassanian style. During the reigns of Shahpur II and his successors Ardashir II and Shahpur III (between 309 and 386 A. D.), up to the reign of Khusrū II (590-628 A. D.), the cultural inter-relation between India and Persia was at its peak. The scene of the so-called Persian embassy being received by an Indian king in full court ceremonial, painted in Cave I at Ajaṇṭā, and another scene identified as that of the Persian king Khusrū Parwiz and his beautiful queen Shirin illustrate the degree of Sassanian influence. This is evident all through in painting and sculpture (see Ills. 28-29) and also in terracottas. The Indian artists in rendering the faces and costumes of their foreign neighbours scored a striking amount of success.

The Buddha image was first made sometime in the early Kushāṇa period. The evidence of the dated images points to the beginning of the reign of Kanishka as the time of its first appearance in stone. The image from Kosam is dated in the year 2 of Kanishka, i. e. 80 A.D., or forty years later according to some scholars. The seated Bodhisattva[31] image from Katrā Keshavadeva, Mathurā, although undated is considered

to bs a typical example of the art of the first century A. D. If we compare it with the standing Buddha image of monk Yaśadinna (Ill. 17) in the Mathurā Museum, we notice a remarkable difference of style. The distinguishing features of the Kushāṇa and the Gupta images of Buddha and Bodhisattva may be briefly tabulated as follows :

Kushāṇa	*Gupta*
1. Plain halo with scalloped margin.	Elaborate halo carved with lotus design.
2. Absence of beaded border in the halo.	Presence of beaded border as part of the decoration of the halo.
3. Simple background of seated figures.	High-backed throne with horizontal architrave and brackets of prancing *vyāla* figures (*vyāla-toraṇa*), as in the seated Buddha at Sārnāth (Ill.20)
4. Bodhi tree carved on the back slab.	Absence of the Bodhi tree.
5. Auspicious symbols carved on the parasol.	No auspicious symbols, but parasol, if there, carved with lotus design similar to the halo.
6. Muscular body.	Elegance of form.
7. Shaven hair. Spiral hairlock covering bump of intelligence.	Shaven hair type extremely rare (e.g. Maṅkuwār Buddha, Ill.16). Hemispherical protuberance on head covered with short curls.
8. Drapery partly plain and partly folded; folds less stylised. Thick drapery.	Drapery entirely shown folded; folds more stylised. Specimens with foldless drapery rare. Transparent drapery.
9. Folds of Saṁghāṭī engraved.	Folds of Saṁghāṭī shown in relief.
10. Drapery covers the left shoulder (*ekāṁsika*).	Drapery covers both shoulders (*ubhayāṁsika*).
11. The lower garment reaching to shanks or the middle of the leg.	Drapery falling still lower, a little above ankles.
12. Plain border of Saṁghāṭī.	Edge of Saṁghāṭī frilled and ornamented.

13.	Right hand in *abhayamudrā* joined to the back slab with a projecting cushion.	Right hand in *abhayamudrā* carved free (in some cases, it is of separate piece fitted in socket).
14.	Ūrṇā mark between the eye-brows usually present.	Usually not indicated. It is absent in most cases.
15.	Nipples indicated.	Nipples indistinct or not indicated.
	Deep navel shown.	Navel not indicated.
16.	Eyes round and fully opened ; the line of the eyelids projecting.	Eyes elongated and slightly opened; no projecting eye-line.
17.	Eye-brows separate, upper and lower eye-lids equal. Figure looking up or towards the spectator.	Eye-brow line continuous ; upper eye-lid broader ; gaze fixed at the tip of nose.
18.	Neck folds indicated by receding tiers.	Neck folds indicated by modelling.
19.	Less stylised ear-lobes.	Elongated ear-lobes hanging free.
20.	Presence of flying figures throwing flowers and flywhisk-bearing attendants (in case of seated figures).	Flying figures only rarely; in some cases Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara as attendants.

8. See my *Indian Art* (Varanasi, 1965), ch. 10.
9. See my article, "Gupta Temple at Devagarh," *Art and Thought* (pp. 51-54, ed. by Bharat Aiyyar, Bombay, 1950) where the Kṛishṇa *līlā* panels were first identified by me.
10. *A. S. I., A.R.*, 1925-26, pp. 183-84 ; my article, "Brāhmanical Images in Mathurā," *J. I. S. O. A.*, 1937, p. 124, pl. XIV, fig. 1.
11. Cf. M. S. Vats, *Gupta Temple at Devagarh* (A. S. I. Memoirs No. 70, Delhi, 1952), pl. XIX, c.
12. Ibid., pls. XV-XVII; my *Studies in Indian Art*, figs. 131-32.
13. Mathurā Museum, No. 2577; my article in *J. I. S. O.A.*, 1937, pl. XV, fig. 1; also my *Indian Art*, figs. 175-77.
14. 'Kailāsasya daśamukhabhujochchhvāsita-prasthasandheḥ'/*Meghadūta* I. 58.
15. See my article in *J. I. S. O. A.*, 1937, pl. XIV, fig. 2.
16. The Ardhanārīśvara head in the Mathurā Museum, No. 362, published in *J. I. S. O. A.*, 1937, pl. XV, fig. 2. Here Textfig. 5.
17. Cf. my *Mathurā Museum Catalogue*, pt. IV : "Architectural Pieces," *J. U. P. H. S.*, 1951, pp. 141-43.
18. Cf. *Raghuvaṁśa* XIII. 58.
19. 'Mūrte cha gaṅgāyamune tadānīṁ sachāmare devamasevishātām' / *Kumārasambhava* VII. 42.
20. Cf. *Ekāvalī* or *sthūlamadhyendra-nīla-muktāguṇa*, *Meghadūta* I. 46; also *Raghuvaṁśa* XVI. 69; *Harshacharita* (Nirṇyasāgar edn.), p. 252; my study *The Deeds of Harsha* p. 235, fig. 91. See here Ill. 69.
21. Mathurā Museum Nos. 771; 2525; D. 28; see my *Mathurā Museum Catalogue*, pt. II, pp. 6, 10, 12. Another example in the Boston Museum.
22. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, Dec. 1919, No. 104, pp. 60-62.
23. Cunningham, *A. S. R.*, vol. X, p. 13, pl. VII, G.
24. 'Guptaṁ dadṛiśurātmānaṁ sarvāḥ svapneshu vāmanaiḥ / Jalajāsi-gadā-śārṅga-chakra-lāñchhita-mūrtibhiḥ' // *Raghu.*, X. 60.
25. Cf. my *Indian Art*, fig. 33, b.
26. Ibid., p. 184.
27. Cf. my article in *J. I. S. O. A.*, 1937, pp. 128-9, pl. XV, 3-4.
28. J. Hackin, *Recherches Archéologiques au Col de Khair Khaneh près de Kābul* (Paris, 1936), p. 17; *J. of the Greater India Society*, Vol. III, pp. 23-35.
29. *The Deeds of Harsha*, pp. 104, 183-4.
30. *A Handbook to the Mathurā Museum* (2nd edn., 1939), p. 52, fig. 41; *Studies in Indian Art*, fig. 111.
31. *Indian Art*, pp. 242-43, pl. CXIV.

IV

SCULPTURE

Much of our esteem for Gupta art can be credited to its excellent sculpture. Under the stroke of the master's chisel the stone became malleable as it were, and was transformed into figures of permanent beauty and grace. The image of Gaṅgā from Besnagar is one such example.[32] The three well known sculptures from Devagaḍh, fixed in the niches of the Vishṇu temple, are excellent examples of beautiful carving (Ills. 55-57). The attendant figures of men and women on the two door-jambs of the same temple are genuine works of elegance hardly excelled (Ill.53). Or, take the examples of the seated Buddha at Sārnāth and Ekamukhī Śivaliṅgas from Khoh and Uchāharā (see Ills. 20, 8 and 10).

The success of Gupta sculpture lies in its attaining a golden mean between the obtruding sensuousness of the Kushāṇa figures and the symbolic abstraction of the early medieval figures. The sportive female figures on Mathurā rail-pillars 'standing in various attitudes and delicate poses, stealing the hearts of the gods as it were with the play of their eyes'[33] were now a thing of the past. Such aggressive beauty was no longer in accord with the spirit of the Gupta age in which such greater emphasis was laid on the ideal of *tapas* (cf. the penance of Pārvatī described by Kālidāsa in the *Kumārasambhava*, canto 5, and the Devagaḍh sculpture of Nara and Nārāyaṇa in their Himālayan hermitage, Ill. 56). In fact, the motif of the railing female figure fell into disuse, as the Gupta artist concentrated his attention not on the external decoration but on the central cella, its entrance and above all the divine image inside the shrine. The sensuousness of the female form was restrained by a conscious moral sense, and nudity as a rule was eliminated from Gupta art. The effect of the diaphanous drapery in Kushāṇa art is to reveal the charm of the flesh, the Gupta artist on the other hand employs drapery to conceal those very charms.

Gupta sculpture is at once serene and energetic, spiritual and voluptuous. On the technical side, a delicate plastic handling of the human form is an abiding quality of the figure-sculpture in this period. The artist no longer relies on volume to give an impression of grandiose,

but focusses his attention on elegance which is not lost in the exuberance of ornaments, or in the ponderous details of attributes and drapery. The keynote of his art is balance and freedom from the dead weight of conventions.

Stylistically as well as chronologically, the mature plastic form in the Gupta period at Mathurā is to be understood as a natural achievement of the vigorous art activity of several preceding centuries. The legacy of Kushāṇa sculpture of Mathurā is distinctly noticed in the full-modelled body of Gupta figures. The early concept of massiveness and weight implying sheer material volume came, however, to be transformed under the new outlook that based primarily on the spiritual or inner vision.

The products of the fourth, and even early fifth century, doubtless exhibiting the change in aesthetic ideal, appear to convey the same ponderous feeling that characterises the second-third century statues of the Kushāṇa period. But in the fifth century, the body though still distinguished by its volume, is now slender, the poses more gracefully executed and the elements of drapery and ornamentation more restrained than in the preceding phase.

The growth of Gupta art and motifs appears to have also derived in several ways from the Āndhra-Ikshvāku culture of the eastern Deccan. In its latest phases, dating roughly in the 2nd-3rd centuries, and also up to the early 4th century at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa the great school of art in the Kṛishṇā valley shows a mastery in which detailed ornamentation and elegance of figure-sculpture are joined in a rare harmony. Numerous bas-reliefs crowded with figures showing rhythmic movements of dance and devotional poses, display an art which is highly sensuous and tender in feeling. This experience of inner joy at first revealed here in dynamic movements of the body, is seen subsequently turned to the inside of the body, thus disciplining in art of the Gupta period the human figure more artistically or elegantly in plastic terms.

Gupia sculpture is, more consciously and explicitly than most schools of plastic art, a synthesis between the external form and the inner meaning. As Kālidāsa has put it, it is like the union of Speech and Thought (‘*vāg-artha-sampṛikta*’, *Raghuvaṁśa* I. 1). The spiritual content underlying the outer forms of Gupta art is writ eloquently in the faces of the Buddhist and Brāhmanical images, which combine an

intense religious feeling with a tranquil and classical charm. Such expression can only represent the achievement of a true harmony, at this period, of thought and action in the actual lives of men. In the religious sphere the Bodhisattva ideal of the preceding Kushāṇa epoch, enjoining each to live for all, gave place to a new ideal of the attainment of the highest wisdom as an individual objective (*anuttara-jñānāvāpti*).[34] In accordance with this new outlook each seeker looked for reality within himself and strove for individual deliverance. He became himself a glowing centre of beauty and spirituality. The introvert vision of the Gupta Buddha image is sharply distinguished from the open, smiling countenance of the Kushāṇa Bodhisattva. Peace, light, and bliss, emblems of the highest wisdom, are reflected in the radiant visage of the Gupta Buddha (Ills. 17-20). The change is visible to anyone who looks at a seated image of Buddha carved in the Sārnāth School (Ill. 20), or the standing Buddha image of Mathurā set up by the Monk Yaśadinna wrought in serene contemplation (Ill. 17), or the image of the sage Kapila in the Isurumuniya Vihāra in Ceylon.

The Gupta type of Buddha image shows many features of stylistic evolution from the Kushāṇa iconography which can be easily distinguished (*ante*, pp.21-22). Aesthetically the Buddha image attained a high prefection in early Gupta art. It becomes the true vehicle of the spiritual quality of Gupta culture which found its consummation in Prefect Wisdom. This supreme ideal of the Mahāyāna was now, according to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*,[35] called the *Ekayāna*, 'The Only Way.' By the time of the Guptas, the Mahāyāna Buddhism had established a separate pantheon with several Dhyānī Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The rival schools of the Mahāsaṁghikas, Sammitīyas, Sarvāstivāndins, etc., took a living interest in this elaboration, each claiming allegiance to the Buddha and declaring Him to be in favour of its own particular doctrine (*svamatāviruddha*). Both in the seated and the standing images, the figures are gracefully conceived with "wet" drapery revealing the form without excess of folds or ornamentation. The image is now fully evolved and becomes the archetype for all subsequent Buddhas, whether in sculpture or in painting, and whether in India or abroad. The *mudrās* or poses of the hands are clearly defined for specific purposes. The figures of the two attendant Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya, establish them-

selves in full majesty as independent images. Beautiful specimens of them have been found; for example, the Avalokiteśvara figure from Sārnāth standing on a full-blown lotus.[36] Near the Bodhisattva's feet appear two tantalized spirits (*preta*) with emaciated bodies whom the compassionate lord is feeding with a stream of nectar flowing from his right hand. Similarly the cult of the Bodhisattvas with the effigy of their spiritual parents, the Buddhas, became widely popular in this period. Amongst the best creations of the age may be reckoned the standing Buddha of Mathurā (A.5; Ill.17), the seated Buddha of Sārnāth in preaching pose (Ill.20), the colossal copper Buddha (about 7.5 feet high) from Sultāngunj (Bhagalpur), now preserved in the Birmingham Museum (Ill. 21) and the bronze Buddha now in the Boston Museum—all products of about the 5th century and marked by ineffable sweetness and spiritual calm.

One of the comparatively late arrivals in the Mathurā Museum, is the detached head of a colossal Buddha image found in perfect preservation (Ill. 19). It shows all the characteristic features of the best traditions of a Buddha image as noticed at Mathurā in the Gupta age. The head is covered by spiral locks of hair including the *ushṇīsha* or protuberance on the skull. The ears are elongated which is considered to be the mark of a great man. The eyes are half-closed with the gaze fixed on the tip of the nose. The nostrils are clearly indicated. The upper lip is thin and the lower lip drooping. The ends of the mouth (*sṛikkā*) are also indicated, as they were done for the first time in Gupta art. The double round chin shows the inner strength of Buddha's will. The serene spiritual expression on the face, and the radiant divine form is incomparable, though the head is typical of the other great Buddha images produced at Mathurā during the Gupta period.

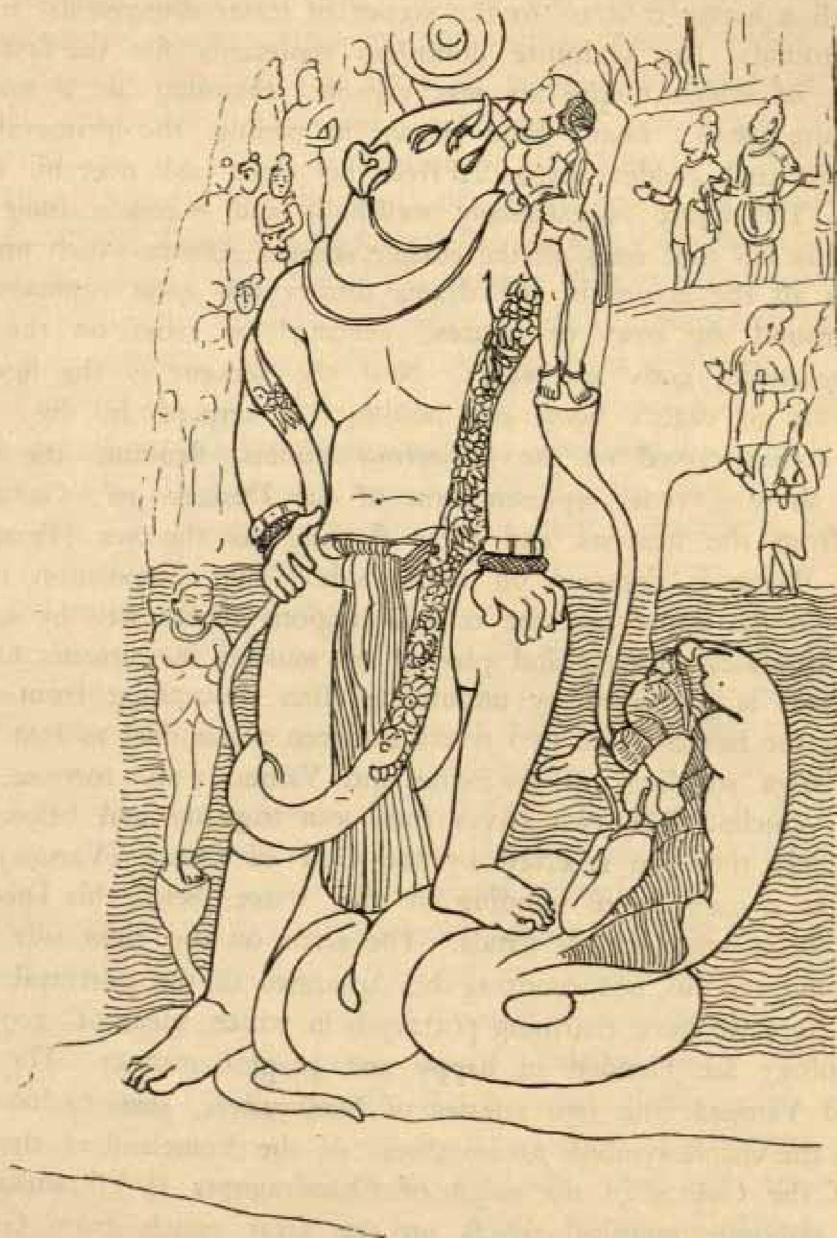
The spiritual expression, the tranquil smile and the serene contemplative mood of the Sārnāth Buddha poised on a diamond seat (*padmāsana*) in the attitude of preaching the way of salvation show us the highest triumph of Indian art, viz., an attempt to visualise the superman endowed with the highest wisdom (*anuttarajñāna*), detached and austere in his discipline but still disposed for the good of mankind (Ill. 20). The expression on the face of the Mathurā statue is equally spiritual and possessed of an almost divine radiating influence (see Ills. 17-19). The drapery is trans-

parent in both cases, that at Sārnāth being plain and at Mathurā marked with schematic folds. The halo in the Kushāṇa images of the Buddha was plain with only a short scalloped margin (*hastinakha-prabhāmaṇḍala*) but the halo of the Gupta Buddhas is elaborated and covered all over with concentric bands of graceful ornamentation. The halo on the Mathurā Buddha imitates the full-blown lotus,[37] with concentric bands showing rope design, rosettes, foliated scroll with peacock design, a coiled garland, beaded border and scallops (*hastinakha*). This halo was schematically painted, traces of paint in the peacock's feather being still preserved.[38] The seated Buddha image from Maṅkuwār in Allāhābād District dated in the reign of emperor Kumārgupta I (Gupta Year 129=448-9 A. D.),* is the only Gupta example of the old Kushāṇa type with shaven head and a muscular bust (Ill. 16). It was obviously rejected as it did not satisfy the aesthetic instinct of the age. In all other images the head is covered with curls. This image also shows the webbed fingers, an auspicious mark of greatness, which is referred to by Kālidāsa in the case of prince Bharata as '*jālāṅgulikaraḥ*'.[39] Transparent drapery, plain or with folds, clearly revealing the form is a marked feature of Gupta images.

The Buddha image in the Gupta school of Sārnāth provides an important testimony of the freshness and vitality of that art. As Smith remarks in connection with the Sārnāth figure, the Gupta Buddha is "absolutely independent of the Gandhāra school;"[40] it reveals the fullest fruition of the Indian genius in perfecting a figure in harmony with its own spiritual conceptions. Even the Gandhāran Buddhas, in stucco and clay, of this period are profoundly indianised and hardly show any foreign feature. The image was also integrated to the pattern of the structural temples. The devout inspiration manifest in the Gupta Buddha figure travelled to greater India, to the east and the north where it is palpable as a living force in the innumerable images of the succeeding centuries.

[Of the dated specimens most important evidence for a study of early phase of Gupta style is supplied by the Lakulīśa figure (Ill. 7) on a Mathurā pillar (Gupta Year 61=380 A. D.), and the colossal Varāha (Ill. 12, Textfig. 9) and adjoining reliefs at Udayagiri (Gupta Year 82=401 A. D.), both of the time of Chandragupta II. The bas-relief of standing Lakulīśa,

carrying a staff and with prominent genitals, is in direct tradition of the corpulent dwarfs of the Kushāṇa period. It hardly shows any change either in style or concept. But the sculpture at Udayagiri manifests the stylistic transformation brought about within two decades.]



Textfig. 9. Mahāvarāha image Udayagiri Cave C. 400 A. D.

This gigantic rock-cut sculpture shows the Varāha incarnation of Vishṇu uplifting the earth from the ocean. It is a magnificent idea depicting the divine power rescuing the earth from the depths of the ocean, in the midst of cosmic convolutions at the dawn of creation. The Varāha stands in a niche 12′8″ in height. Its size and powerful execution furnish a happy contrast to the scenes of lesser dimensions forming the background. The sculpture doubtless represents for the first time the vigour of which Gupta art was capable. Standing as a powerful human figure with a boar's head shown in profile, the primeval Boar supports the earth goddess suspended from his right tusk over his mighty left arm. The figure is extremely well-built and wears a long lotus garland. His left foot rests on the cosmic serpent Ananta which provided support to all the actors in the drama during the great upheaval. In the background are rows of figures, executed in relief on the rock-wall, representing gods and sages. Near the serpent is the figure of Garuḍa with an eagle's head and holding a serpent in his hands.

The scenes carved on the projecting panels, flanking the central sculpture, show a vivid representation of the Descent of Gaṅgā and Yamunā from the heavens and their flowing to the sea (Textfig. 6). The same theme is depicted on either side. The composition on the left shows in the upper part the celestial regions represented by a flying god and Apsarases dancing and playing on musical instruments. On each side a stream is portrayed by undulating lines descending from above. On leaving the heavens, the two rivers are seen personified as two female figures, Gaṅgā standing on crocodile and Yamunā on tortoise, their respective vehicles. The two rivers then join together and below enter the sea where they are received by the God of Ocean (Varuṇa), who is shown as a male figure standing in the water below his knees, and holding a water vessel in his hands. The scene on the right side of the niche is similar to this, only omitting the Apsarases in the portrayal of the heavens. Here we have charming portrayals in which ideas of geography and mythology are blended in happy and graphic manner. The rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā, the two arteries of Madhyadeśa, seem to have been adopted as the visible symbols *par excellence* of the homeland of the rising powers of the Guptas in the reign of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya.

The elaborate mythical reliefs on the great panels from Gaḍhwā, now in the Lucknow Museum, also belong to the early fifth-century

style. The former existence of a religious establishment at Gaḍhwā is indicated by the several Gupta inscriptions, which Cunningham[41] found from the site, belonging to the reigns of Chandragutpa II (Gupta Year 88 = 407-8 A. D.) and Kumāragupta (Gupta Year 98 = 417-18 A. D.).

The great architrave or frieze (13 feet 3·5 inches long) shows on the left a circular medallion with the Sun god riding his seven-horse chariot, and at the extreme right the Moon in a similar Maṇḍala. In the central niche appears the standing figure of eight-armed Vishṇu as Viśvarūpa. On its either side long square spaces portray a multitude of figures taking part in the procession in honour of the deity, in addition to a group of sages engaged in religious duties to the left of Vishṇu (Ill. 66).

Another lintel from Gaḍhwā in the Lucknow Museum illustrates the lively scene of the wrestling duel between Pāṇḍava Bhīmasena and Jarāsandha, the king of Magadha (Ill. 65). In date it seems to be somewhat later as compared to the reliefs on the huge architrave.

The glory of Gupta art is fully exemplified in a class of *eka-mukhī* Śiva-liṅgas from the Khoh and Uchāharā area. The one fully discussed by me in the *Lalit Kalā*, [42] and illustrated here on Ill. 10 (and Textfig. 10) is from Uchāharā. Śiva's face shows the perfect expression of *samādhi* as described by Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhava* (III. 44-50). The gorgeous matted locks in two tiers are charmingly depicted in an orderly fashion, with a girdling band in the middle and strings of strands of descending locks on the two sides also arranged in a happy manner. The whole treatment is distinguished by a balance and well-defined features, and the effect of eminence imparts dignity to the expression. It is the '*unnaddha-jaṭājūṭa*' of the poet, but without the ophidian ribbons which would only be scaring in such a serene countenance. The digit of the new moon above (*bālendu*) and the vertical eye in the forehead below (*kapāla-netra*) perfectly balance each other in a face aesthetically perfect, and the neat *akshamālā* on the neck serves as the fitting base of an ascending symbolism.

The introvert gaze was a typical feature of *samādhi-mudrā*. All the five points detailed by the poet in the *Kumārasambhava* (III. 47-50) are here represented, viz., the slightly beaming pupils made motionless, the eye-lashes still, the vision directed to the centre of the eye-brows, the rays shooting downwards, and combined effect of it all being one of self-vision. In the whole range of Indian sculpture this particular Śiva-Liṅga is hard to be surpassed for the ex-

pression of spiritual contemplation or *samādhi* in its face. It is verily the flaming lamp of supreme wisdom, untrammelled by outer flickers—a *niśkampa-pradīpa* in the words of Kālidāsa. It is only in the Gupta age that we find such perfection gracing the endeavours of the artist. He was no doubt a real genius who captured a vision of the divine truth in one of his rare moments. The image seems to have been carved in the last quarter of the fourth or the first quarter of the fifth century when Gupta art was at its best.



Textfig. 10. Ekamukhī Śivaliṅga. From Uchāharā area. Late 4th or early 5th cent. A. D. Ht. of head 10″.

Almost similar and of the same masterful treatment is the other one-faced Liṅga from Khoh, now in the Allāhābād Museum (Ill. 8). The third example of this group, similar in style but with more elaborate ornamentation in the form of a broad torque round the neck, a *maṇi-mālā* near the line of hair on the forehead, and a *gavāksha-chūḍāmaṇi* ornament on the hair above, is installed in the sanctum of the extant Gupta temple of Śiva at Bhumarā (Ill. 12). Its introvert facial expression distinctly implies inner spiritual illumination of Śiva's *samādhi*. [As compared to the above two Liṅga-faces it is gigantic in size and represents the late fifth or early sixth century style, particularly marked in the elaborate ornamentation and acuteness of angles.]

[The same plastic quality and superb facial expression as we see in the above Uchāharā and Khoh sculptures is exhibited by a *gaṇa* figure from Nāchnā Kuṭhārā.] It is a fine vigorous example of Śiva's playful *gaṇa*, duly adorned with fluttering ringlets, wristlets, armlets, a tiger's claw-pendant (*vyāghra-nakha*) and a waistband. [The irresistible energy ossessed in his throbbing body appears as if held in control by the contorted mien of vigorous limbs.] (Textfig. 11).[43] The next sculpture (Textfig. 12) is the head and bust of a male figure found in the jungle round Nāchnā Kuṭhārā. Its height is 18″. A typical Gupta feature is the pearl-string (*ekāvalī*) round the neck and a big necklace pendant from the left

shoulder reminiscent of the *Śesha-hāra* described in the *Kādambrī* which became known as *ṭoḍara* in the medieval period. The figure is powerfully built and the head thrown up with a partial twist towards his right.



Textfig. 11. Gaṇa. Ht. 27¼″. From Nāchnā Kuṭhārā.



Textfig. 12. Male figure. Ht. 18″. From Nāchnā Kuṭhārā.

An outstanding sculpture of the early fifth century, from Nāchnā Kuṭhārā, depicts Mahānaṭa Śiva in the Tāṇḍava dance (Textfig. 13). Only its



Textfig. 13. Mahānaṭa Śiva in the Tāṇḍava dance. Ht. 13″. From Nāchnā Kuṭhārā.

upper portion of the bust is now preserved. Fortunately what has remained, viz., the head and the arms, adequately illustrate the action of the cosmic dance undertaken by the deity (Ill. 9). The expression on the face bespeaks great majesty and steadfast support to the titanic pulsations of the dance. The released energy is expressed through the upper two arms rhythmically thrown up and artistically framing the head, and also the pair of lower arms, one of which in puissant horizontal extension is partially preserved. The fourth arm and the legs must have been portrayed in a manner to convey adequately the power and rhythm inherent in the performance. The twist of the bust towards the proper left is a very significant feature marking both the direction of the force and the over-all restraint exercised in its liberation. Dance is primarily the creation of rhythms, the balancing and equipoising of revolutionary tensions in one restrained harmony. This appears to be the earliest representation of the Tāṇḍava motif so far known in Indian art, and one may at once concede that the artist's effort has crowned with complete success in the portrayal of the necessary element of the theme, viz., cosmic power lashing into motion but wedded to eternal poise and rest. The ruffled matted locks, the *chintāmaṇi* jewel on the head, the *ananta-valaya* on the arms, and the bangles on the wrists serve as happy items of decoration enhancing the general effect of the subject.

The best qualities of Gupta plastic art may be studied in a superb example of the fifth century Vishṇu sculpture (Ill. 13) from Mathurā (Mathurā Museum, E. 6), with the face revealing the contemplative serenity of celestial *samādhi* with which we are familiar on the face of the famous statue of Buddha dedicated by the monk Yaśadinna of Mathurā and the seated image of Buddha in the Sārnāth Museum. Its bust is carved in the round and the modelling has the effect of work turned on lathe, a comparison often noticed by contemporary poets.[44] The image was originally crowned with an elaborate parasol carved with three circular bands of lotus scroll and cable design (*ante*, p. 17).

Another important sculpture of Vishṇu (No. 2525, Mathurā Museum), somewhat resembling the above in its spiritual expression and artistic merit, shows the god with a lion (Nṛisiṁha) face on the left, and a boar (Varāha) face (partially damaged) on the right of the human head (Textfig. 7). A similar bust from Mathurā now in the Boston Museum.

In words of Coomaraswamy, " The figure exhibits the broad shoulders and slender " Lion-waist " of the Indian ideal type, with the firmness and fullness of flesh and massive modelling characteristic of the Gupta period; it is an important document equally of art and iconography." [45]

Some of the Tīrthaṅkara images of Mathurā also appear to show the same perfection of plastic form and spiritual feeling that characterised the Buddhist sculpture in this period. An early Gupta example is that of a seated Jina in the Mathurā Museum (No. B. 1). It is an over life-size image, showing possibly Vardhamāna seated cross-legged (*utthita-padmāsana*) in the attitude of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*), with both hands resting in the lap. A lotus halo is partly preserved behind the head and the hair arranged in short schematic curls (Ill. 14). Here the austere stiffness that one finds in the Kushāṇa Jina statues has given place to subtle grace and a divine effulgence on the face.

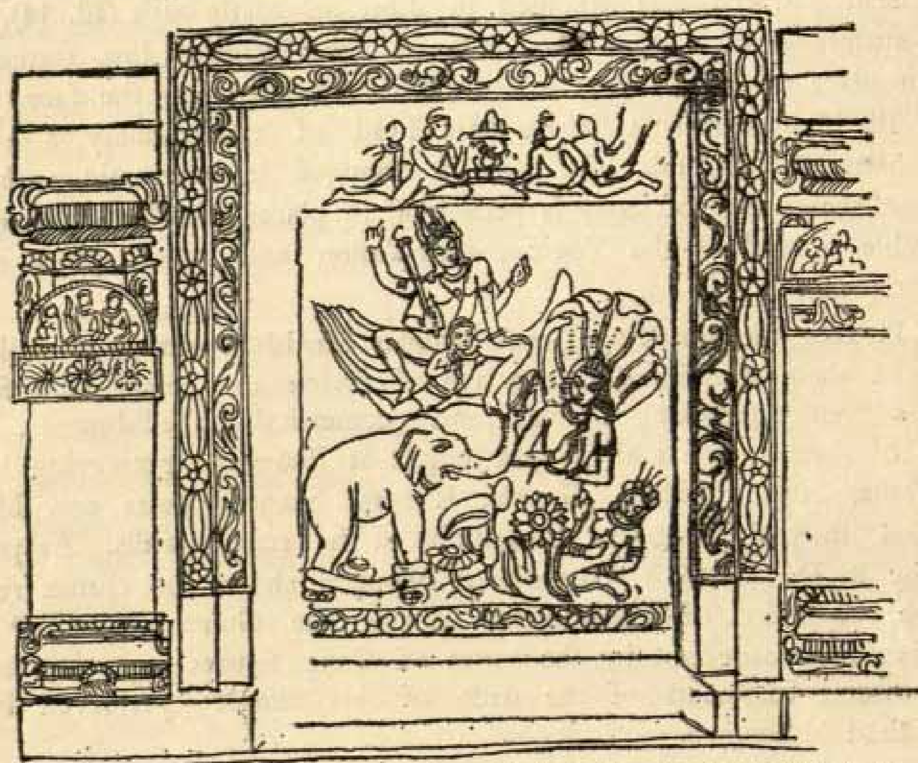
Ill. 15 illustrates a Tīrthaṅkara head of extraordinary size from the Mathurā Museum. The hair is arranged in schematic curls, and, though the surface of stone is peeled off in places, the face still appears a visible symbol of the Yogic contemplation and inner peace of the Victor (*Jina*).

In fact, the surviving Gupta temples furnish a wealth of sculpture; each of them containing a conclave of divine and semi-divine figures, and a rich repertoire of floral and geometrical embellishments. Foremost of them is the early Gupta temple at Bhūmarā, preserving images of Yama, Sūrya, Brahmā, Gaṇeśa, Kubera, Skanda, Indra and Mahiśa-mardinī, in chaitya-window medallions of the temple walls. As pointed out by R. D. Banerji, " The art of Bhūmarā shows the climax reached in the production of human forms during the Gupta period." [46] This fact is fully borne out by the series of Gaṇa figures appearing on the architectural fragments of the dado of this temple preserved in the Allāhābād Museum.

Next in sequence of time comes the rich sculpture of the Vishṇu temple at Devagaḍh. Its glory lies in the three large sculptural slabs on the three walls of the temple and to be seen from outside at the time of circumambulation. A series of upright reliefs fixed in the plinth are veritable documents of Indian iconography (Ills. 2—6, Textfigs. 2—4). They bear full witness to the continued richness of Gupta carving in the late fifth century, and are stylistically somewhat later in date as

compared to the great *rathikā*-panels and the doorframe of the shrine proper (Ills. 53, 55-57).

The three large relief-sculptures, each encased within an ornate frame of pilasters and floral mouldings and projecting exteriorly from the temple wall, show three scenes of Vishṇu legend, namely Śeshaśāyī, Gajendramoksha and Nara-Nārāyaṇa-Tapasyā. The niche on the east side wall represents the two sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa engaged in austerities in their Himālayan hermitage. Both are seen seated in the attitude of meditation. The presence of deer and lion below their seats in the mountain caves marks the atmosphere of an ideal *āśrama* (Ill. 56). The north wall panel has the scene of Gajendramoksha, in which the



Textfig. 14. *Rathikā-bimba* or exterior wall niche showing Gajendramoksha legend. Side jambs show conch and lotus motifs. Devagaḍh temple.

god seated on the back of flying Garuḍa is redeeming the lord of elephants from the clutches of a giant serpent. The artist has put into the portrayal so much of expression and intense feeling coupled with quick action. It has almost the effect of a pictorial illustration in stone (Ill. 57, Textfig. 14).

The *rathikā*-panel on the south side wall shows Vishṇu sleeping on the couch of the cosmic serpent Śesha (Ill. 55). The goddess Lakshmī is shampooing his right leg. Above is seen a row of divinities including Kārttikeya on peacock, Indra on elephant, Brahmā on lotus and Śiva-Pārvatī on Nandī. Below, a relief consisting of five male warriors and a female figure presumably shows four of the personified Āyudhas of Vishṇu and the two demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha in aggressive attitudes. As Cunningham puts it, "The drawing of the figures is generally spirited, and, in the case of the sleeping Vishṇu, the attitude is not only easy, but graceful, and the expression dignified."[47]

Noteworthy is the decoration on the side-jambs framing the panels. The figures of conch and lotus (Textfig. 14) are carved at the bottom with exquisite scroll work rising above. This decorative feature occurs on the other *rathikā*-carvings also. Kālidāsa has made a particular mention of the motif.[48]

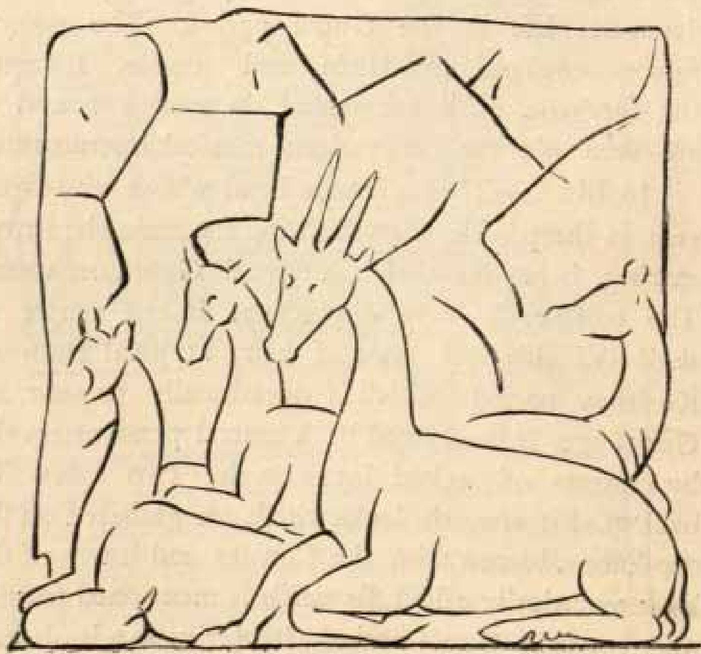
The sculpture of this period is also rich in secular themes taken from human and animal life, and specialises in charming ornamental designs. For example, the rustic scene of dance and music on a lintel from Pawāyā (Ill. 1). It virtually portrays a cross-section of the happy Janapada life in the Gupta period. The party consists of ten female figures engaged in dance and music. Except the dancing figure in the foreground all are seated on stuffed round cushions (*masūraka*), and are seen playing on various musical instruments.

In Ills. 26—27 is a female head whose vivacious expression is fully apparent in the profile view showing the main elements of decoration. The large earring is *tāṭaṅka-chakra*, a typical Gupta ornament mentioned by Kālidāsa. The coiffure is very distinctive. In the centre above the forehead is a shell-like elliptical mass of hair, a typical feature of female coiffure in the Kushāṇa period, which is occasionally present in some specimens of the Gupta age. It is adorned by a central pendant on the forehead and is flanked by clusters of arched locks on the two sides. The main hair is combed backward in smooth locks which are gathered on the crown of the head in a top-knot adorned with the flowers and leaves of the Aśoka tree. This top-knot technically called *dhammilla* is mentioned for the first time in the classical poetry of the Gupta period. Its derivation is obscure, but there is no doubt that it is a Sanskritised form of *dramila*, i. e. belonging to the Tamil country. This fashion may, therefore, be taken to have been borrowed from South

India and it is often depicted in the cave paintings of Ajaṇṭā. Another attractive feature is the garland hanging in a heavy double loop at the back of the head. It represents the *veṇī*, pendant from the main crown of hair and is also adorned with a flowery garland. In this case, its loose end is tucked up with the *dhammilla*. The treatment of the eyes differs from that of the Kushāna period and closely follows the treatment of a cupped lotus leaf, especially like the left eye in this figure.

In Ills. 28–29 is the head of a female; the elongated face, sharp facial features, thin lips, pointed nose, short outward chin and high cheeks, all proclaim its distinctive ethnic character. The long rolled-up turban is unique in the whole range of Mathurā art and shows clear affinities with Iranian figures. Stylistically the figure must be placed in the Gupta period, early 5th century A. D. It seems to portray some Sassanian beauty who was staying at Mathurā.

In the female head in Ills. 24–25, the round ear disc and the floral decoration of the hair are more elaborate. There is an air of aristocratic beauty and charm visible on the young countenance. The two eyebrows are treated as a continuous line but bent in the middle like a bow. The treatment of the lower lip is in the true Gupta style, fleshy and delicate, and is more successful than that in Ills. 26–27. The ornament in front of the hair seems to have been metallic. It resembles a bee with joint outspreading projections. The hair on the head in the upper row must have been adorned by a real garland interwoven with flowers and leaves. The garland is rendered here in a style unusually conspicuous. The discular earrings are of true wheel-like shape beautified by a lotus pattern on the outside. The three features of decoration in



Textfig. 15. Family of deer. Ht. 16" From Nāchnā Kuṭhārā. Early 5th cent. A. D.

this head, viz., the garland top-knot, the leafy scroll in front (*patra-lekhā*), and the round earring with wheel decoration (*patra-veshṭa*), are reminiscent of a typical fashion referred to by Kālidāsa (*Raghu.*, XVI. 67).

A carved panel, which originates from the older Gupta temple complex at Nāchnā Kuṭhārā, shows a family of deer (ht. 16″, width 16″). In a hilly terrain a male deer with two does and a young one is majestically seated in a reposeful attitude (Textfig. 15). The group represents a fine treatment of animal sculpture in early Gupta art of about the beginning of the fifth century A. D.[49]

However, the best carved portions of the Gupta temples from the aesthetic point of view are their doorframes (see Textfigs. 1,16; Ills. 53-54). They



Textfig. 16. Devagaḍh temple doorway showing *Pratihārī, Patralatā, Mithuna, Śrīvṛiksha* and *Prama ha.*

show a highly specialised artistic scheme for beautiful figure sculpture of the river-goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, Gaṇa and Pramatha attendants, etc., and for fine ornamental carving of scroll and arabesque designs. In fact, the doorway leading to the sanctum was the chief centre of attraction in a Gupta temple serving as an elegant outer frame to set off the image installed in the cella. It was marked by the following decorative features :—A projecting image in the centre of the lintel (*dvāra-lalāṭa-bimba*), the figures of the river goddesses either shown as flanking the lintel or occupying the bottom of the either jamb, attendant figures occupying the lowest portion of the jamb, more or less stylised designs of the chaitya-window, svastika, pot-and-foliage, the amorous couples, foliated scroll, and a number of similar embellishing devices. From this approach, the doorway decorations to be seen at Udayagiri (Cave shrine No. 6), at Tigowā (Kaṅkālī Devī temple), Bhūmarā (Śiva Temple), Nāchnā Kuṭhārā (Pārvatī Temple, Ill. 54), Dah Parbatiā (where only the stone doorframe survives, Textfig. 1) and Devagaḍh (Vishṇu Temple, Textfig. 16, Ill. 54) are to be regarded as the gems of Gupta carver's art. [Doubtless these allow a fuller study more or less in a sequential order of the exceptional attainments of art in this period.]

On a door-jamb from Gaḍhwā we find the Kalpalatā or creeper motif treated in an exquisite style. With youthful maidens springing from its branches it has entwining leaves and offshoots (Ill. 67). According to Cunningham, "it is the undulating stem of a creeper with large curly and inter-turning leaves, and small human figures, both male and female climbing up the stem, and sitting on the leaves in various attitudes. The whole scroll is deeply sunk and very clearly and carefully carved; and ... is one of the most pleasing and graceful specimens of Indian architectural ornament."[50] The foliated scroll was a special trait of Gupta carving. The deep-cut foliage decorations and creepers with interturning tendrils are very often repeated leaving a pleasant effect on the mind. Both in stone and in moulded bricks, an infinite variety of scroll motifs, with a tendency towards arabesque, is found. The most conspicuous example of this decoration is available in the casing slabs round the Dhamekha Stūpa at Sārnāth (Ill. 64, Textfig. 17). As V. A. Smith has rightly observed, "The intricate scroll-work on the western face of the celebrated Dhamekha Stūpa at Sārnāth is one of the most successful examples of the decoration of a large wall surface to be

found in India. The artist who traced the wonderfully complexed spirals must have undergone prolonged and rigorous training."[51] Contemporary literature refers to this kind of work by several expressions, e. g. *patra-latā, patrāṅguli, patrabhaṅgarachanā, anekabhaṅgakuṭila-patrāṅguli,*[52] etc. The drum of the Dhamekha Stūpa shows a broad course of beautifully carved elaborate ornament with geometrical and floral patterns combined with birds and human figures. The carving seems to repeat the designs of the original cloth-covering called *devadūshya*, which was offered to cover the entire body of the Stūpa and was woven in a great variety of rich and beautiful textile patterns.[53] This carving is doubtless a magnificent example of large-scale surface decoration and shows the high achievement of Gupta workmanship in designing most intricate scroll-pattern. The fondness for curves and twists grew in later times with an increasing tendency for deep cutting until at last it reached its logical sequence in the almost perforated work of the stone screens and *Jāli* in medieval art (c. 10th-12th century); the earliest specimen being the perforated-screens at Aihole, with radiating fish-spokes in the Lāḍkhān temple (c. 550 A. D), and the culmination of the motif being particularly notable in the Chandela and the Dilwāḍā temples.

It appears that a complete reorganisation of the religious establishment in the form of shrines and monasteries took place in this period at Sārnāth under the direction of Buddhist teachers and with the patronage of the rich merchants of Vārāṇasī, who had amassed huge wealth from their land and oceanic trade. They poured freely of their money to embellish the monuments at Sārnāth, the most prominent of them being the Dharmachakra or Dhamekha Stūpa. It was provided with a stone-casing (called *śilā-kañchuka*) by the opulent trading community of Vārāṇasī. It seems that the whole Stūpa from top to bottom was covered with carved slabs of the most beautiful designs that were originally employed on the textiles manufactured at Vārāṇasī. They were widely known as Kāśī cloth (*kāśika-paṭa*) which were exported to distant centres, for example to Sindh or the ancient Sauvīra country. Some fabrics specially prepared were known as *deva-dūshya* or fabrics intended as offering for divine images or objects, and their price according to the *Divyāvadāna* was one lac silver Kārshāpaṇa coins. Those designs which were woven into the textile pieces were transferred to stone with great fidelity. We have abundant evidence in the carvings of the Dhamekha

Stūpa of the variety and richness of the decorative motifs consisting of intricate scroll-work, floral designs such as rising creepers with interlacing filaments, figures of human beings, Yakshas, birds and animals, and many kinds of geometrical patterns. These carvings demonstrate an unusual mastery in embellishing large space with decorative patterns of exceeding charm and conceived in right harmony and proportion. Even now what is left on the exterior of the Dhamekha is a feast for the eye. The coalescing meanders of horizontal creepers with their crests and troughs enclosing different figures are shown encircling the building in bold sweeping movement and appearing as the richly embroidered girdle round the middle portion of the divine Stūpa, which in truth symbolised the body of the Buddh

When the great Stūpa was completed with all its artistic embellishment, it appears, a big public celebration was organised with such eclat and munificence that a new word became current in Sanskrit language of the time as *Kāśī-maha*, i. e. the great religious festival of Vārāṇasī (or of Vārāṇasī Cloth), a term recorded in the *Divyāvadāna*. Stories of such a celebration were carried by merchants of Vārāṇasī dealing in textile trade with the rich towns of Sauvīra country of modern Sindh. It is said that in imitation of the Vārāṇasī Stūpa another Stūpa was raised in Sindh where also the Kāśī-maha festival was organised with the same magnificence. Perhaps it is the great Stūpa at Mīrpur Khās (see Textfigs. 78—80) raised in brick and terracotta but distinguished by equally elaborate decorative designs, sculpture and moulded bricks of great beauty and variety.

Sculpture also found a due place in the cave-architecture of this period in the Deccan. Specially rich in this aspect are the façades of Cave 19 at Ajaṇṭā and of the caves at Kārle and Kanherī, in which images of the Buddha occur as a beautiful and effective feature of the decoration.

From Cave 16 at Ajaṇṭā, the late fifth century figures of Gandharva couples floating in the air may be particularly mentioned for their form and gracefully easy postures. Remarkable for a study of Gupta art style in the Deccan are :—(1) the seated figures of a Nāgarāja and his queen, in a rock-cut niche outside Cave 19, Ajaṇṭā; although Nāga figures, the human form of both the male and the female is in true Gupta style; note their characteristic ornaments, 6th century;[54] (2) Bodhisattva litany, in Cave 66, Kanherī, 6th century;[55] (3) Buddha

with attendants, Bāgh Cave, 5-6th century;[56] (4) Buddha's Parinirvāṇa scene, a large-sized sculpture in Cave 26, Ajaṇṭā, c. 600-642 A. D.[57]

The art critic can discern the full-fledged Gupta inspiration in the contemporary Hindu sculptures of the Deccan as well. This is particularly true of the beautiful sculpture in the caves at Mogularājpuram and Undāvalli. The carving at the latter place treat of a number of themes from Hindu mythology like Varāha raising the earth, Trivikrama taking three paces, Vishṇu rescuing Gajendra, Kṛishṇa lifting Govardhana, etc., all of which show unmistakable Gupta inspiration in style and technique.

In the extreme north-west, not many sites of the Gupta period have yet come to light. The old Kushāṇa school in Gandhāra continued to flourish under the Gupta hegemony also, but with the change in medium, and completely Indianised in style, now being vigorous and free, and much more animated in expression than the earlier art of stone owing to the influences from the Gangetic plains.

The remarkable bronze statue of four-faced Brahmā from Mīrpur Khās in Sindh, now in the Karachi Muesum, is an exceptionally good specimen of the art of metal-casting in this period (Ill. 22) and stands in comparison with the Sultanganj Buddha figure (see Ill. 21). Somewhat smaller than the life-size, it shows the god in his characteristic iconography, with the heads covered by a pile of the matted locks and the belly slightly protuberant; his right hand suggests the gesture in Vedic recitation and the left seems to be originally bearing a manuscript. [In its terse plastic treatment of the body and iconographic details, the image is essentially connected to the late style of Central India and Mathurā. The bronze is no doubt distinguished by the notable Gupta qualities, viz., elegance of form and posture, facial expression and superior workmanship.] Similarly, the rich terracotta material from the Buddhist Stūpa at Mīrpur Khās (see Textfigs. 78—80),[58] comprising large moulded panels showing almost half life-size Buddha and Bodhisattva figures furnishes a valid proof to the peripheral overflow of the art of the middle country.

32. Now in the Boston Museum. Cf. Coomaraswamy. *Hist. of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 177.

33. This *Rāya-paseṇiya-sutta* passage is discussed in its relevant art context in my *Indian Art*, p. 224.

34. Cf. the inscription on the Buddha Statue set up by monk Yaśadinna (Mathurā Museum, No. A. 5), Ill. 17. Also see *Saddharmapuṇḍarika* II. 120.

35. 'Ekaṁ hi yānaṁ dvitiyaṁ na vidyate na hīnayānena nayanti Buddhāḥ' / *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* II. 55; also II. 54; II. 70; II. 142-43, etc.
36. D. R. Sahni, *Catalogue of the Sarnath Museum*, pl. XIII (b).
37. Kālidāsa compares the halo of his ideal hero Raghu with a full-blown lotus parasol (*padmātapatra*) and says that the former was the exact shadow of the latter (*Raghuvaṁśa* IV 5); this description seems truly confirmed in the elaborate lotus halos of the Gupta images. In the *Kumārasambhava* he refers to the halo of Pārvatī as '*sphurat-prabhāmaṇḍala*' on account of its radiating pencils of light (I. 24).
38. Mr. H. Waddington of the Arch. Deptt. first drew my attention to the surviving marks of the original colour scheme on the halo of the Mathurā Buddha (Mathurā Museum, No. A. 5).
39. 'Jālagrathitāṅguliḥ', *Śākuntala*, act VII.
40. Smith, *Hist. of Fine Art in India and Ceylon* (1st edn., Oxford, 1911), p. 170.
41. *A. S. R.*, vol. III, p. 53; vol. X, pp. 9 ff.; Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors* (Calcutta, 1888), Nos. 7-9, pp. 36 ff.
42. "A Survey of Gupta Art and some Sculptures from Nāchnā Kuṭhārā and Khoh," *Lalit Kala*, No. 9 (April, 1961), pp. 22-6.
43. Ibid., p. 25, pl. VIII, fig. 4.
44. Cf. my *The Deeds of Harsha*, pp. 94, 100; 'ullikhitapārśvaprakāśitakraśimnā', *Harshacharita* (N S. edn., p. 13). Kālidāsa mentions it as 'tanuvṛitta-madhya' (*Raghuvaṁśa* VI. 32)
45. *Bull. of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts*, Dec. 1919, No. 104, pp. 60–62.
46. R. D. Banerji, *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 203.
47. *A. S. R.*, vol. X, p. 110.
48. *Meghadūta* II. 17, where the Yaksha tells the cloud that his house at Alakā will be recognised from the painted (or carved) symbols of conch and lotus on two sides of the entrance (*dvāropānte likhitavapushau śaṅkhapadmau cha drishtvā*).
49. Cf. my article in *Lalit Kala*, No. 9, pl. VIII, fig. 6.
50. Cunningham, *A. S. R.*, vol. X, p. 12.
51. Smith, *Hist. of Fine Art in India and Ceylon* (1st edn.), p. 168.
52. *Harshacharita* (NS. edn.), pp. 9, 127; *Kādambarī* ,(P. L. Vaidya edn.), sections 12, 85, 116, 127; Daṇḍī's *Avantisundarī* (Trivandrum, 1954), p. 4; etc.
53. V. S. Agrawala, *Sārnāth* (Deptt. of Archaeology, Delhi, 1956), p. 21; cf. *Divyāvadāna*, 37 (Rudrāyaṇāvadāna).
54. *Hist. of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 172.
55. Ibid., fig. 164.
56. *The Bagh Caves* (India Society, London, 1927), pl. VI.
57. V. S. Agrawala, *The Heritage of Indian Art* (New Delhi, 1964), fig. Sculpture 43.
58. There is a good number of terracotta panels from the Mirpur Khās Stūpa preserved in the Bombay Museum (cf. *Prince of Wales Museum Bulletin*, No. 7, 1959-62).

V

TERRACOTTAS

Terracottas formed another important branch of Gupta art. In this modest medium gifted clay modellers created things of real beauty and achieved a wide popular basis for their art. In status and prestige the modeller compared favourably with the builder, the painter and the engraver.[59] Clay figurines were used both for religious and secular purposes. They served as the poor man's sculpture and contributed largely to broadbase aesthetic culture and popularise art. As small objects easy to reproduce mechanically from moulds they were capable of mass production. Gupta men and women passionately fond of creating beautiful forms employed the terracotta medium with fondness and success. Inside the home, in the drawing rooms, and the lover's bed-chamber terracotta figurines showing amorous scenes or forms of exquisite beauty were displayed (Ill. 34). On the exterior walls of houses plaques depicting deities, dwarfs and animals, or narrative scenes from epics and mythical stories were used in friezes. In the temple and the Stūpa also bigger plaques and statues in clay were freely used. On festive occasions terracotta figurines were specially in demand. At the time of Rājyaśrī's marriage multitudes of modellers (*lepyakāra*) were engaged in moulding clay figures of fishes, tortoises, crocodiles, cocoanuts, plantains and betel trees.[60] Besides, female clay-figurines holding auspicious fruits, technically named *Añjali-kārikā*, were fixed in the sides of the altar.

The terracotta figurines of the Gupta period may be classified under three heads :—(a) gods and goddesses, (b) male and female figures, (c) animal figurines and miscellaneous objects. The last comprises water-spouts in the form of various animal heads in which the *makara* motif is more numerous than others. Besides, we have moulded bricks and panels that show pleasing variety of designs and motifs, such as the *nandyāvarta*, lotus, dogtongue, guilloche, fret or diaper, and scroll and arabesque decoration. Some of them were decorated with bangle designs for the wrist, called *kaṭaka* (*kaḍaga* in the *Aṅgavijjā*), for the feet, called *khaḍaga* (in the *Aṅgavijjā*), with leaves, petals and sepals, with floral

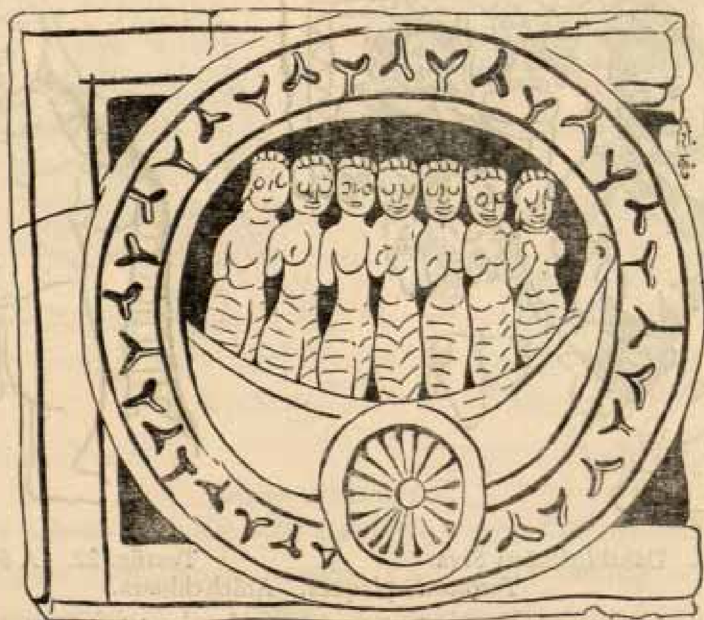
rosettes and lotuses, with trumpeting elephant heads (*hatthika* in the *Aṅgavijjā*), with trident or the *kuñjaraksha* motifs of diaper variety. There were rectangular and square (*lekhakāra*) or even round bricks (*maṇḍaleshṭakā*).

The moulded bricks and terracotta plaques and pilasters from the temples at Raṅg Mahal and in the vicinity are some of the gems of religious plastic art.[61] However, the available material is eloquent enough to give an indication of time on the basis of its mastery of poses and expression. We may assign the figurines, especially the Kṛishṇa-līlā plaques and the Śaivite plaques, to the last quarter of the fourth century A. D. A complete plaque shows Kṛishṇa lifting Govardhana. He stands among a herd of cows standing and seated on his right and left, and holds aloft his left hand on which the enormous weight of the stony mass is confidently supported. The muscular build of the body, the prominent open eyes and the moustaches of Kṛishṇa point to early stylistic traditions. Another plaque shows Kṛishṇa with a staff and demanding the toll (*dānalīlā*) from a milkmaid or *gopī*. The general style of the youthful figure of Kṛishṇa is similar to that of the attendant figures in Gandhāra style. The arrangement of the *dhotī* up to the knees with parallel festoon-like folds in Sassanian style is a new Gupta feature, while the central fold falling between the legs is in the Kushāṇa tradition. On a similar plaque occurs a Śiva-liṅga on a pedestal or *pīṭha*, installed under a canopy (*ullocha*) having a pendant cluster in the centre, which is often mentioned in the Purāṇic descriptions of *liṅga-pratishṭhā*. A rectangular terracotta panel depicts three-faced Śiva seated on the Kailāsa with Pārvatī on his left (Ill. 30). Though only three faces are shown here, but actually they represent Śiva's five-headed aspect, of which two are logically missing in a frontal view. Among other pieces, there is a figure of the Chakra-Purusha (Ill. 33) of Vishṇu; another of Aja-ekapāda (Ill. 32), a form of Rudra worshipped by the Pāśupatas, and one showing Mahishamardinī (Ill. 31).

Mathurā was the other great centre of terracotta art in the Gupta period. Of the fourth century, we have a beautiful terracotta panel, found from the bed of the Yamunā, showing Kārttikeya riding on his peacock.[62] Though the figure is fragmentary, there is much preserved to reveal the new standard of beauty and superb workmanship.

Its smiling facial expression shows it as a lovely example of early Gupta art. On another clay plaque, four-armed Vishṇu with additional Nṛisiṁha and Varāha faces is to be seen.[63] The two upper arms of the deity are now broken, while the two others are placed on the heads of dwarfish *Chakra* and *Gadā āyudha*-personifications squatting in *utkuṭikāsana*. The figure is somewhat crude and can hardly compare in aesthetic merit with the Kārttikeya plaque; this also appears to be the case with some other terracotta pieces from Mathurā; two of them showing four-armed standing Vishṇu and Ekamukhī Śivaliṅga.[64] But a different group distinctly shows the achievements of art proper to the age. For example, the Mahiśamardinī plaque showing the four-armed goddess killing the Buffalo demon, Durgā seated on her lion and holding Skanda in her lap, an *ardhanārīśvara* head[65] and the pot-bellied Kubera. There is also a very fine terracotta medallion from Sahet-Mahet, now in the Lucknow Museum, that shows goddess Durgā seated on lion.

At Ahichchhatrā were found some excellent pieces of Gupta art in clay.[66] Several of them are distinguished by superb workmanship, and on the basis of their style may be assigned to a period between



Textfig. 18. Terracotta plaque showing a symbolical representation of the Sun-god. Ahichchhatrā.

c. 450 and 650 A. D. Of special charm are the heads of Śiva and Pārvatī with gorgeous coiffures (Ill. 44-45). A round plaque depicts the Sun-



Textfig. 19. Śiva as Bhairava.



Textfig. 20. Śiva with begging bowl.



Textfig. 21. Dakshiṇāmūrti Śiva.



Textfig. 22. A form of Śiva.

Terracotta plaques. Ahichchhatrā.

god seated in a chariot moving on one wheel, with seven horses and twin goddesses Ūshā and Pratyūshā shooting arrows of light. Another remarkable plaque shows a symbolical representation for the Sun-god.

He is represented by a prominent orb placed against the rectangular frame of a chariot moving on one wheel. Standing inside are seven female figures, most probably the solar rays personified (Textfig. 18).

A number of other beautiful terracotta plaques of large size, which formed part of the frieze around the upper terrace of the temple at Ahichchhatrā depict the principal events in Śiva's life :—his destruction of the sacrifice of Daksha Prajāpati, his father-in-law; the holocaust wrought there by his playful *gaṇas*; his assumption of the terrific form of Bhairava; his peripatetic aspect with the begging bowl in hand; his *Ūrdhva-retas* form as Lakulīśa; his dalliance with Pārvatī in the renewed marital life, and finally his reposeful ascetic form as Dakshiṇāmūrti, Lord of Yoga and divine wisdom (see Textfigs. 19-22).

At Ahichchhatrā almost life-size images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā (Ill. 47) stood on the sides of the main approach to the terraced temple of Śiva (Ill. 63). Another big figure from Kasiā, now in the Lucknow



Textfig. 23. Head of Śiva.



Textfig. 24. Ardhanārīśvara head.

Rājghāṭ Terracottas.

Museum shows seated Pārvatī with her two sons Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya engaged in a lively scramble for sweet balls. The baking of such large-sized images and plaques is always a matter of considerable difficulty and must have presented a difficult technical problem to the expert clay-modellers of the Gupta age.

Religious figures at Rājghāṭ[67] are very few. The best piece amongst them is a singularly majestic head of Śiva (5" high) showing prominently the crescent, vertical eye, and matted locks (Ill. 41, Textfig. 23). It represents the best traditions of Gupta *mukhaliṅgas* from Uchāharā and Khoh. The fragmentary lower portion of a four-armed Vishṇu with short loin-cloth, *vanamālā*, and the two side emblems, *chakra* and *gadā*, is also noteworthy for its skilful workmanship (Ill. 37).

About half a dozen heads from Rājghāṭ introduce us to an interesting theme of Śiva's iconography made popular in the age on democratic level. The best of them is given as Ill. 40 (Textfig. 24). The matted locks of Śiva are shown on the right side and the curled hair of Pārvatī on the left. Here Ardhanārīśvara or Pārvatī-parameśvara form can be easily recognised as combining the half male and half female aspect of Śiva.

Terracotta panels of considerable size showing religious themes formed a regular feature of the brick-built Gupta structures at Ahichchhatrā, Bhītargāon, Pāwayā, Śrāvastī (Sahet-Mahet), Kasiā, Rājgir, Nālandā, etc. Besides those mentioned earlier, an excellent clay representation of the Śeshaśāyī Vishṇu (Ill. 61) is noteworthy from the Bhītargāon temple (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta). The wealth of moulded panels, still *in situ* and forming the remarkable wall friezes at Bhītargāon (see Ill. 62), with sharply defined features of the fifth-sixth century style has not yet been adequately studied and illustrated in detail. The Rāmāyaṇa panels from Sahet-Mahet are full of liveliness, although inferior in art, and may be comparatively of late date.

By far the best examples of the stucco art of the Gupta period, however, were the image plaques (2 ft. in height; now mostly destroyed) fixed on the exterior of the cylindrical brick-structure of Maṇiyār Maṭh at Rājgir. These consisted of a Śiva-liṅga, a six-armed dancing Śiva, a four-armed deity wrongly identified as Bāṇārura, and several Nāgas and Nāginīs; of the latter a standing female is illustrated here (Ill. 48). It shows fine and sensitive workmanship, and affords, being no less important than the copper statue from Sultānganj, a clear proof of the stylistic perfection reached in the eastern Indian or Magadha school of Gupta art in the mid-fifth century.

The great monastic centre at Nālandā was established during the Gupta period. But its main art activity belongs to the early Pāla age, excepting Temple site No. III that has preserved a good number of terracotta panels showing Buddha and Bodhisattva figures, ascribable to the sixth century. Similarly, two distinct periods of art are also recognised in case of the decoration of the stupendous brick-built Stūpa at Pahārpur (Rājashāhī District, Bengāl), the first of the sixth-seventh century and the second, beginning quite later. This art had taken root in the soil and was in the hands of more humble artisans than was the art of sculpture. The loss in respect of skill and finish was more than compensated by the delineation of homely subjects of everyday rural and outdoor life, of men and animals, and of stories current in folk-lore. It was truly a folk art vibrating with life and expression.

Some beautiful terracotta plaques and medallions from Mahāsthāna acquaint us with another notable centre of this art in Bengāl. A remarkable find was a fragmentary pot-sherd bearing in low relief a scene in which a man riding in a chariot drawn by four horses is depicted as discharging an arrow at a herd of deer and a centaur. A beautiful medallion having lotus-petal border shows a girl and a youth, standing with amorous gestures. A rectangular plaque, with a graceful lady reclining on couch, possibly represents the dream of queen Māyā.

The group of detached male and female figurines, from Gupta sites all over the country, shows a great variety of forms, comprising representations of aristocratic men and women, figures of foreigners from Persia and Central Asia whose influx in the population introduced new facial types, too conspicuous to be ignored by the modellers, and ordinary figures of attendants of all classes, like grooms, elephant-riders, jesters and dwarfs (*Vāmanaka*), etc. A scientific study of the Śakas, Pahlavas, Kushāṇas, Pārasīkas, Hūṇas and other races entering India in early times is needed to identify the various facial types from amongst hoards of terracotta figurines found during the excavations of ancient sites in North India. Amongst them detached heads predominate and for our period three types may be roughly distinguished. Firstly, Sassanian heads with a peaked chin covered very often with a short beard, aquiline or long "Pārsī" nose, heavy eyelets, sometimes applique, crio-sphinx eyes, a round turban or *kulah* cap. This almost illus-



trates the description given of them by Ammianus Marcellinus : "The Persians were almost all slender, with dark or livid complexion, hard 'goat-like' eyes, arched eyebrows meeting in the middle, carefully tended beards, and a long frizzy hair." A corresponding female type also occurs. Secondly, there is the type representing some Central Asian nomads whose precise identification is still uncertain. In this class the head often has a conspicuous size, plump cheeks, a double chin and usually ends in a tenon by which it was fixed to the rest of the modelled body. The workmanship is comparatively crude. The female figure in this group shows a projecting ridge of hair on the forehead and pig-tail coiffure at the back of the head. On the technical side coarse clay mixed profusely with rice husk is used. These heads stand out not as specimens of art but as objects of historical value on account of their ethnc interest.

The third group of heads made of fine well-baked clay originally belonged to smaller plaques which were completely pressed out of moulds. The faces combine elegance of features with gorgeous coiffure and constitute a veritable gallery for the study of beautiful types admired in that art-conscious age ((Ills. 39-40, 42-43, 46). Hundreds of specimens hold out to our eyes even to-day the charming ideals of feminine beauty immortalised by the classical poets like Kālidāsa and Bāṇa who strive so often to paint a vision of loveliness conceived by men and women in their times. The terracotta figurines from the recent excavations at Rājghāṭ and Ahichchhatrā present a feast of beauty to the eye and the best female heads skilfully finished appear like lyrics expressed in clay. They are remarkable firstly for the pleasing variety of coiffure and secondly for paintings in lines and colours still preserved on some of them. The most characteristic style was to arrange the hair in spiral curls on both sides of the forehead in tiers. Gupta men and women had a special fondness for this mode which was called *alaka* (Ill. 39). Some excellent specimens show the style of hair in the form of peacock's feathers sweeping straight on the two sides from the central parting and ending in short volutes (Ill. 43), described as *barhabhāra* coiffure in the *Meghadūta* and the *Daśakumāracharita*.[69] Another aristocratic fashion of hair took the form of a honeycomb, which formed a very attractive design (Ill. 34) and seems to have had an international vogue in Gupta times, being patronised by society women even in Rome. A beautiful



Textfig. 25. Female head with hair arranged in spiral curls known as *alakāvalī* style. (See Ill. 39)



Textfig. 26. *Chhatrākāra-śiraḥ* showing head covered with radiating locks of hair in the form of a parasol. (See Ill. 42)



Textfig. 27. *Chhatrākāra-śiraḥ* or style of parasol-like hair. Male fashion.



Textfig. 28. Honey-comb hair-style showing the lateral masses rendered like a honey-comb of cellular structure.

Rājghāṭ Terracottas.




Textfigs. 29-30. Terracotta male heads. Rājghāṭ.




Textfigs. 31-32. Terracotta female Heads. Rājghāṭ

Trefoil styles of coiffure with or without parting, showing hair-locks with a central topknot (in cases backed by a crest) and plaited plain bands in the middle having twisted spiral curls arranged in (two or more) parallel tiers superimposed one above the other on the two sides reaching almost to the shoulders.





Terracotta female busts. Rājghāṭ.

Textfig. 33. Trefoil style showing *sīmanta* or central parting of hair with a jewel or *chaṭula-tilakamaṇi*.

Textfig. 34. Hair-dress covered by *odhnī*.





Textfig. 35. *Mauli-bandha* with *Bhramaraka* style. Textfig. 36. *Tribhakta mauli-vinyāsa*.
Rājghāṭ Terracottas.



Textfig. 37. *Śṛiṅgāṭakākāra trimauli* style.



Textfig. 38. Hair-style showing piled up matted locks.

Rājghāṭ Terracottas.

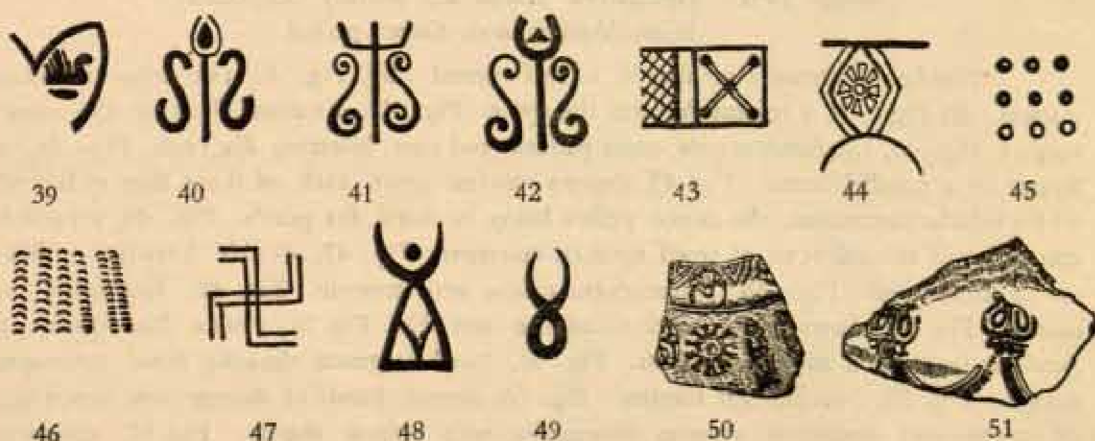
plaque from Rājghāṭ shows a lady gracefully seated on a swing suspended from an Aśoka tree. The breeze in the garden is wafting her flowing garment and gently shaking the foliage of the tree. It is a masterpiece combining movement and poise (Ill. 36).

The Gupta terracottas also reveal the use of brush by skilful painters. Unfortunately a limited number only preserve the traces of this once common decoration. [70] In 1911-12 the Bhīṭā excavations exposed a considerable number of terracottas about which Sir John Marshall wrote : " Side by side were produced in Gupta times, figurines of a far more finished style, which reflects in minor measure the artistic spirit of the paintings and sculptures of that epoch. All are mechanical reproductions from moulds, a few of which were found, but duplicates in the collections are rare. Some of the figurines are without slip or paint; others are painted in a monochrome—red or yellow, for instance, and others are coated with a slip and adorned with a variety of colours—

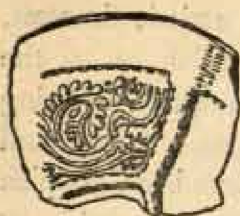
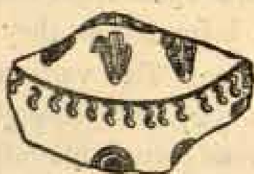
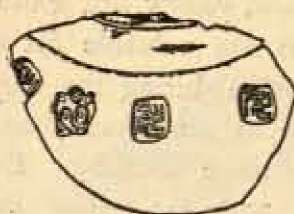
red and pink and yellow and white. But apart from their artistic interest, these figurines are valuable for the information they furnish as to the fashions in vogue during the Gupta age. The various modes of dressing the hair were as numerous then as they are among women to-day, and perhaps even more startling. The men certainly must have been foppish to a degree, with their long curls falling loose on one side only, or elaborated like a full Gregorian wig, or coiffured with jewels in the Antoinette style, or disposed more severely in the royal manner of Persia."[71]

Much of the terracotta work is informed with the spirit of true art prevailing at the time and it may rightly be claimed for the Gupta artist that he adorned whatever he touched. The vision of Bāṇa-bhaṭṭa that the four quarters in his age shone forth as if beautified by clay models (*pustamayya iva chakāsire kakubhaḥ*)[72] seems to have been based on the production of clay and stucco work on a mass scale. We know that almost all the Jauliān and Mohrā Morāḍu sculptures are executed in clay or stucco once beautifully coloured and gilt, and that after the third century A. D., there was not much production in stone in the Gandhāra school of the North-West.

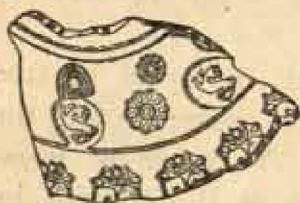
The pottery types of the Gupta period played as noteworthy a part in the cultural scheme of the age as the clay figurines. A considerable number of drinking bowls and cups from Ahichchhatrā (1940-43), for the first time scientifically separated and studied, afford an outstanding proof of the

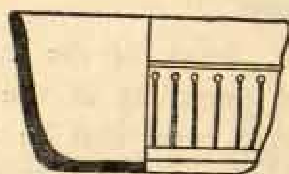


excellence of the potter's craft. Although small in size the bowls are perfect in shape and finish and marked by many decorative patterns,

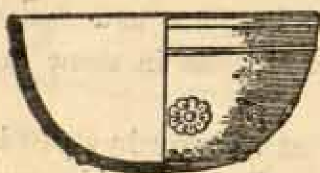
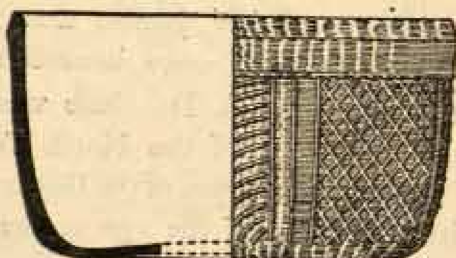





52 53 54 55





56 57 58

59 60

Textfigs. 39-60. Decorative motifs and pottery fragments.
From Ahichchhatrā. Gupta period.

Textfig. 39 shows a petal with a half-opened bud. Fig. 40, two *nāgas* flanking a spear. In Fig. 41, a trident replaces the spear. Fig. 42, a variant form of the same symbol. Fig. 43, the familiar criss-cross pattern and two bisecting diagonals. Fig. 44, a flower in a parallel frame. Fig. 45, depicts vertical rows, each of three dots embossed with a tubular instrument, the raised pellets being intended for pearls. Fig. 46, a pattern consisting of vertical rows of small notched crescents. Fig. 47, double Svastika embossed in bold relief. Fig. 48, *dharmachakra chaitya* with crescent. Fig. 49, Nandipada or taurine. Fig. 50 shows lotus, taurine and the twin fish. Fig. 51, ornate Nandipadas as pendants between a row of festoons. Fig. 52, bowl fragment showing floral arabesque design. Fig. 55, Svastika and rosettes. Fig. 56, several bands of designs, one consisting of taurines and another of rosettes alternating with animal shapes. Fig. 57, radiating check-designs alternating with vertical rows, within borders, of beads. Fig. 58, row of vertical needle designs. Fig. 59, a band of alternating conch and lotus motifs. Fig. 60, radiating check-designs and vertical rows of parallel hatchings.

such as rosettes, geometrical figures, bands of lotuses alternating with conch, running boar and elephant designs[73] (Textfigs. 39-60). They are in a variety of shapes — round, ellipsoidal, flat-bottomed, open at the top and receding at the base. The rims in most cases are plain with recurving feature. The form of the water-jars is that of a long-necked bottle with a bulging belly usually finished in red glazed polish and furnished with attractive animal spouts. Gupta drinking vessels show striking examples of handles of which one with the figure of Gaṅgā found at the site of Naliasar-Sāmbhar in Jaipur is particularly happy. In one case at Ahichchhatrā, a pot is exactly of the shape and size of a jack-fruit with a granulated surface. This kind of jar is actually referred to as *panasa* in the Jaina text *Aṅgavijjā* in its list of pottery.



Textfig. 61. *Makaramukha* spout. Ahichchhatrā.

59. Bāṇabhaṭṭa skilfully compares these four branches of art. Vaiśampāyana seated statuesquely in a love-smitten condition is said to appear as static as a pillar in a building, a figure in painting, a carved statue in sculpture or like a figure modelled in clay ('stambhita iva, likhita iva, utkīrṇa iva, pustamaya iva', *Kādambarī*).
60. *Harshacharita*, Cowell's translation, p. 124; my *The Deeds of Harsha*, p. 96. 'Lepyakārakadambaka - kriyamāṇamṛiṇmaya - mīnakūrmamakara - nārikelakadalīpūga-vṛiksham' (N S. edn., p. 142).
61. V. S. Agrawala, "The Religious Significance of the Gupta Terracottas from Rang Mahal," *Lalit Kala*, No. 8 (October, 1960), pp. 63-71.
62. Cf. my *Śiva-Mahādeva the Great God*, pl. XXX; *Mathurā Museum Handbook*, fig. 40.
63. V. S. Agrawala, "Mathurā Terracoatts," *J. U. P. H. S.*, vol. IX, pt. II (July, 1936), p. 35, fig. 55.
64. Ibid., pp. 35-6, figs. 54, 56.
65. Ibid., pp. 35-6, figs. 53, 59.
66. V. S. Agrawala, "Terracotta figurines of Ahichchhatrā, District Bareilly, U. P.," *Ancient India*, No. 4 (New Delhi, 1948).
67. V. S. Agrawala, "Rajghat Terracottas," *J. U. P. H. S.*, vol. XIV, pt. 1, 1941, pp. 1-8, figs. 1-16; *J. I. S. O. A.*, vol. IX, 1941, pp. 7-11.
68. Kālidāsa often describes *alaka* to be the mark of a beautiful face, the hair of Indumatī being referred to as *valibhṛita*, i. e., frizzled or twisted in short crisp ringlets (*Raghuvaṁśa* VIII. 53). The female toilet-experts (*prasādhikās*) used scented powder and paste to secure the effect of spiral twisting.
69. *Meghadūta* II. 41 (*śikhinaṁ barhabhāreshu keśān*); *Daśakumāracharita*, NS. edn., p. 46 (*līlāmayūrabarhabhaṅgyā keśapāśaṁ cha vidhāya*); p. 60 (*barhibarhāvalīṁ viḍambayatā kusumachandrikāśāreṇa madhukarakula-vyākulena keśakalāpena*).
70. Kālidāsa only once has occasion to describe a terracotta figure in his works and there he notices the clay peacock of the sage child Mārkaṇḍeya to be painted : '*mṛittikā-mayūravarṇachitrita*' (*Śākuntala*, act VII).
71. *A. S. I., A. R.*, 1911-12, p. 72.
72. *Kādambarī*, sec. 120.
73. V. S. Agrawala, "Pottery designs from Ahichchhatrā," *Lalit Kala*, Nos. 3-4 (1956-57), pp. 74-81.

VI

ARCHITECTURE

The wave of creative enthusiasm and the intensely religious purpose behind it that swept the country in this age are seen at their best in the architectural activity of the period which produced the earliest Brāhmanical temple. According to Percy Brown a synchronisation of several circumstances, e. g. the unification of the country under one state, the stabilised rule of a virile and cultured dynasty of rulers whose personal patronage and scholarly encouragement created an atmosphere favourable to the revival of all forms of human activity, and the re-assertion of the innate faith of the people, viz., Brāhmanical Hinduism with its grand mythology, ushered in an era of India's greatest intellectual awakening which influened profoundly the architecture of the age. As he says, "In the art of building two progressive movements of fundamental significance are discernible, one relating to its aesthetic character, and the other to structural procedure. The former marks the begetting of a new sensibility, a change from the mere imitative to the infinitely creative, from the servile copying of meaningless forms expressive of an undeveloped mind and unskilled forces, to a reasoned application of the first principles of architectural compositions. The latter records the use for the first time of dressed stone masonry, a pronounced step in the technique of building construction, the introduction of which placed a new power in the hands of the workman. It was when the art was in such a formative state that there emerged the earliest known conception of the Hindu "house of god". And with the appearance of this type of building, architecture composed of stone masonry made its beginning."[74] The unprecedented prosperity of the state and the people created a widespread belief that their affluent world was a prototype of heaven : *Ṛiddhaṁ hi rājyaṁ padamaindramāhuḥ* (*Raghu.*, II. 50), and in their art of temple building we see but an earnest attempt to create heaven's rich and beautiful mansions on this earth.

With the wide acceptance of the theistic or Bhāgavata religions, the temple made its logical beginnings. In the Kushāṇa period the image was predominant and the modest shrine was only just beginning to

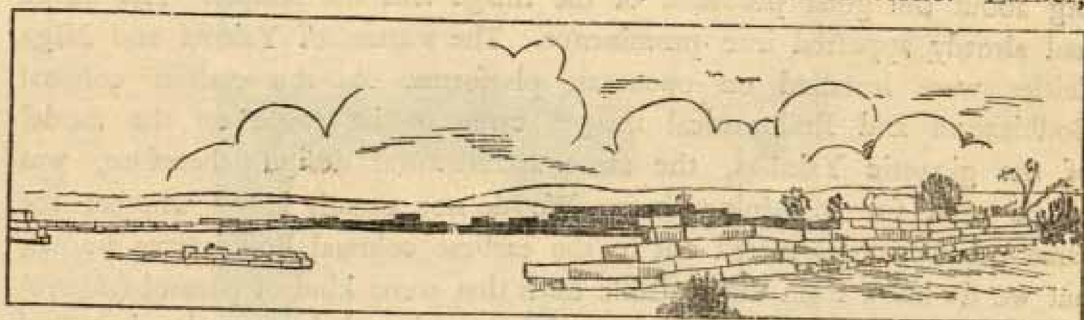
appear. It more or less resembled the form of a *gandha-kuṭī* improvised with three plain slabs held in position by a flat top. In the Gupta period the image of the deity, now fully evolved, found its counterpart in a fully evolved temple with flat roof, porch and plinth. The two match admirably and each a gem in its own way fits the other like jewel and its setting. Subsidiary images and reliefs of attendant figures also find their due place in the scheme of temple-decoration.

The new religious shrine was no common building; it was rather the embodiment of the universal desire to recapture and recreate on the earth something that was in heaven, to realise the *rūpa* of the divine principle (called Deva or Vishṇu or Śiva, etc.) which no human mind could conceive and no physical eye could ever see : 'His form is beyond conception either in extent or in nature.'[75] The invisible lord should be cast in common form to bestow fixity on Him in time and space. This function is served by the shrine, the image and the worship there, all three being enriched with the devotional and meditational powers of the human mind. Thus the *Prāsāda* loaded with beautiful religious sculpture, plastic forms and decorative elements, together with an architectural symbolism of great richness, became a dynamic factor in the assertive aspects of Gupta culture. It stood as the most dominant symbol of all that was best in literature, art, religion and metaphysics. The carved reliefs depicting themes from Purāṇic legends were documentaries replete with symbolical significance. Thus the architectural planning of a religious temple, with its circumambulatory railing, stairway, terrace, focal shrine, cella, image, decorative doorframe, friezes, string-course mouldings, an intricate *śikhara* veneered with *gavākshas* and topped by an *āmalaka* and its *kalaśa*, was considered to mark a supreme event in the life of the community, and depended for its success on the completest expression of its moral and material responses. The shrine stood as a visible symbol between man and God, as the emblem of human endeavour blest by divine grace showering from above. To understand the springs of life and thought in the Gupta age, one should understand the eloquent symbolism of the shrine, whose interior was lighted up with divine forms rapt in *samādhi* and peace, and the exterior adorned with an unusual decorative fervour drawn from a wide range of plant, animal and human motifs or semi-divine forms.

The architectural pattern of the Hindu temple on structural planning is known at present to have made its concrete beginning with the advent of the Gupta age only. However, for its earlier tradition we have to look back a little.

As can be guessed from the evidence in literature, in the beginning in popular religion about 1000 B. C., the Hindu temple evolved from the remotest antiquity was just a platform open to sky with some kind of aniconic representation or symbol of the deity which could more accurately be named as 'shrine'. The symbol placed on the dais was worshipped. There were two kinds of worship : one through *mantra*, and the other a simple popular form of offering flowers, water, sweets, perfume and the lighting of a lamp. There were such shrines to the Earth Goddess (Pṛithivī) or Mahī-mātā, to the Yaksha, Nāga and Vṛiksha Devatās, and to Śiva and Vishṇu. The earliest platforms (Hindi : *thān, chaurā*) were dedicated to the Yakshas. (See '*Yaksha-sadam*' in the *Ṛigveda* IV.3.13). However, the Yaksha 'shrines' were preceded by the Nāga 'shrines' or platforms : the platform-shrine was a very ancient tradition.

The second stage was reached when railings were provided round the platform, first of bamboo and wood, and later of stone. Earlier,

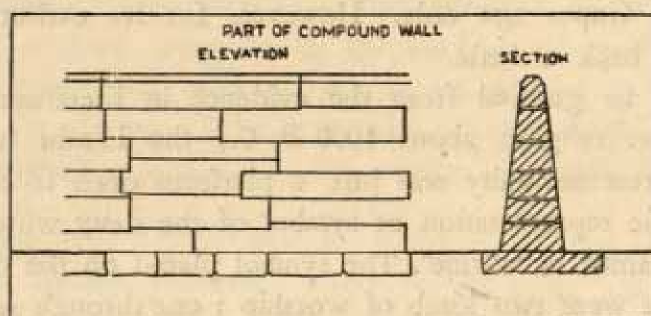


Textfig. 62. General view of the ruins, Nagari. 2nd cent. B. C.

these were of moderate size, but later on in monumental form like the railing at Nagarī, or at Bharhut, Sānchī, and Mathurā round the great Stūpas.

At Nagarī we have the full-fledged Vishṇu platform with a high stone railing around it (Textfigs. 62-63). This structure has a square platform and square railing. The railing consists of huge blocks of stone, 8 or 9 feet in height similar to the English Stonehenge. In the three inscriptions of the second century B. C. in Brāhmī script, it is named as '*Nārāyaṇa-Vāṭaka*' ("Enclosure of Nārāyaṇa"). Similar mode of worship seems

to have been adopted in early Jainism and Buddhism. It is clear that the Buddhists adopted it from earlier traditions. They used the stone



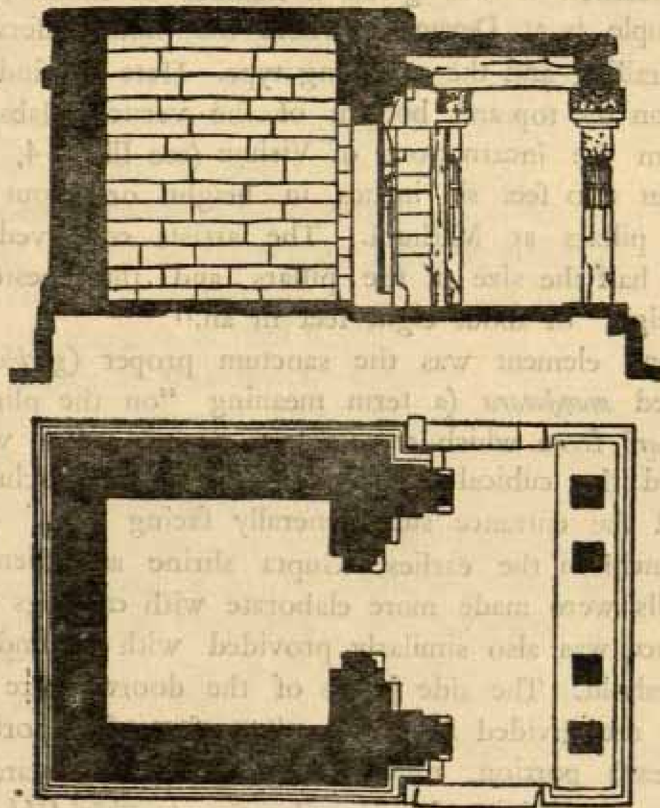
Textfig. 63. Elevation and section. Stone railing. 2nd cent. B.C. Nagarī.

railing and the *bodhi-maṇḍa*. The early Jaina teachers followed in the same footsteps of a central platform surrounded by a railing. This platform was covered with a slab of worship called *āyāgapaṭṭa* ("Tablet-of-Homage"). These two elements, platform and railing, were present in the original Agni-platform (*vedi*), for there was the central platform (*vedi*) and an enclosing railing of timber or bamboo called the *vedikā*.

It was about the first century A. D. that the people were thinking about the great problems of the image and the temple. The image had already appeared into prominence. The statues of Yaksha and Nāga deities were installed on open air platforms. As the earliest colossal Bodhisattva and Brāhmanical images came to be made on the model of the gigantic Yakshas, the same architectural design, therefore, was to be used for enshrining them. We do not exactly know whether the same treatment was meted out to the earliest colossal Bodhisattva statues, but we do know from the available finds that some kind of parasol (*chhatra*) was placed on the top of a stone post to give shelter to the big-sized Bodhisattvas, as for example, the Bodhisattva in the Sārnāth Museum, which was originally made at Mathurā. It is apparent that this idea of providing a parasol, both round and square, was developed in the Mathurā school of art. We have found at Maholī a square parasol also.[76] Next to it, the round or square parasol was replaced by a chamber of moderate size improvised by three erect stone slabs on the three sides of the statue and kept on the top by a flat stone of modest size. The vertical slabs served as the walls and the flat stone as the ceiling of the narrow sanctum. The ceiling slab was carved with a big lotus flower

to give it the appearance of a shrine. We have clear evidence of this in Mathurā archaeological remains, where we find the free standing Bodhisattva installed in a *gandhakuṭī*. See also Bodhagayā inscriptions, Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 58, 64, 66, where *gandhakuṭī* is used for a Buddhist temple, '*bṛihad-gandhakuṭī-prāsāda*', p. 58. It would be reasonable to name this as the earliest type of *garbhagṛiha*, that is, sanctum or cella. For about five to six hundred years the model of the *garbhagṛiha* was the early *gandhakuṭī* of quite small dimensions.

The third stage of evolution begins from about the fourth century in the early Gupta period. The earliest example is found in the Gupta



Textfig. 64. Elevation and ground plan. Early Gupta temple. Sānchī.

temple at Sānchī (Ill. 51, Textfig. 64). Its characteristic features are : (1) there is a small square sanctum or *garbhagṛiha* in which the image was placed; (2) there is a flat top and no *śikhara*; (3) the walls of the sanctum are plain both on the inside and the outside as was in the case of the preceding *gandhakuṭīs*; (4) there was provided a small *maṇḍapa*

or pavilion on pillars but open on the three sides most probably to provide some shelter to the worshippers; (5) a moderately high plinth was provided both for the *garbhagriha* and *maṇḍapa*. As was natural, each one of these features underwent an evolution which may be seen in the group of temples built in the Gupta period.

The next stage in the evolution of the Hindu temple began with the more elaborate development of the plinth (*jagatī*), the sanctum (*garbhagriha*) and the tower (*śikhara*) together with an elaboration of the image itself. This work began about the beginning of the Gupta period and continued right up to the medieval period. So far as the high plinth was concerned it was given a number of mouldings. The first surviving example is at Devagaḍh where the plinth offers a transition between the railing and the moulding type. Here we find several bands of mouldings on the top and bottom of the vertical slabs depicted with the scenes from the incarnations of Vishṇu (see Ills. 2-4, Textfigs. 2-4). They are about two feet six inches in height or about the same size as the railing pillars at Mathurā. The artists conceived of an upper smaller railing half the size of the pillars and thus bestowed on it a respectable height of about eight feet in all.[77]

The second element was the sanctum proper (*garbhagriha*) or the cella also called *maṇḍovara* (a term meaning "on the plinth", that is, *maṇḍa* plus *upari* from which *maṇḍovara* is derived. The word *maṇḍovara* usually denoted the cubical portion of the temple including the three side walls and the entrance side generally facing east). Its beginnings are seen at Sānchī in the earliest Gupta shrine and then gradually the three side walls were made more elaborate with carvings and sculptures and the entrance was also similarly provided with attendant sculptures, lintel and threshold. The side jambs of the doorway are at first single and then they are divided into two, three, four, five portions, later on up to nine, each portion, called *śākhā*, having a separate name after the motifs that occupied it; for example, the *pratīhārī-śākhā*. The charming entrances of the Gupta temples formed the basis of greater elaboration in the medieval period.

The walls of the temple were at first quite plain ; later on they began to be embellished with three niches on the exterior (as at Devagaḍh, Ills. 55-57),each having the image of a deity. Originally the walls were straight without any projections but soon began to be beautified

with three, five, seven or nine projections the central one called '*ratha*' ("chariot") or '*bhadra*' (auspicious face); the others on the two sides of the centre face, '*pratiratha*' (side-chariot) and '*koṇakaratha*' (corner-chariot), or '*pratibhadra*' and '*koṇakabhadra*' which have the same general meaning. In course of time there was an evolution of the *śikhara* which was put on the cubical sanctum. The number of these projections was increased still more so that the sanctum assumed a circular form as in some styles of the medieval temples.

The crowning portion of the temple, i. e. the *śikhara* was conceived of first in pyramidal form with three storeys or tiers, as we see it in the Gupta temple at Devagaḍh (Ill. 52), or in curvilinear contour, as in the Gupta temple at Bhītargāon.[78] (Ill. 60, Textfigs. 73-74).

The surviving Gupta temple sites are almost clustered in Central India. The main temples remaining from the period are as follows :—

1. Buddhist shrine at Sānchī (No. 17).
2. Rock-cut sanctuaries at Udayagiri.
3. Vishṇu temple at Tigowā (in Jabalpur district).
4. Śiva temple at Bhūmarā.
5. Pārvatī temple at Nāchnā-Kuṭhārā.
6. Śiva temple at Mukundarā.
7. A temple in a ruined state but of great merit, at Dah Parbatiā, Tejpur District, Assam.
8. A temple of Śiva at Khoh; the beautiful *Ekamukhī Liṅga*, along with a mass of sculpture showing lively *gaṇas* from this ruined temple are now deposited in the Allāhābād Museum.
9. Temple in ruins at Gaḍhwā, near Allāhābād.
10. The Daśāvatāra temple at Devagaḍh.
11. Brick temple at Bhītargāon.
12. Muṇḍeśvarī temple, near Bhabhuā (Shāhābād Distirct).
13. Buddhist shrine at Bodhagayā.

[14. A small Gupta temple at Kūḍā, near Tigowā.
15. Vishṇu temple at Maḍhiā,—about 20 miles from Tigowā.]

The above list represents the earliest known shrines in stone and brick. They naturally show the early phases and features of temple architecture in India. They were small and unimposing structures with a square sanctuary, about 10 feet in dimensions, and a portico of still

smaller proportions. Obviously they were rather shrines for images than places for congregations of the worshippers. The roof was in the beginning flat and the stone masonry was finely dressed and held together without any kind of mortar. Gupta Brāhmanical shrines, therefore, present a marked contrast to the later Hindu temples with high *śikharas* and extensive *maṇḍapas* (or halls). However, a transition to the later style had begun towards the end of the Gupta period and can be seen in the Daśāvatāra temple at Devagaḍh, which had originally a tower of about 40 feet : its stones were secured together by dowels and its four porches afforded relatively more space for the worshippers to congregate.

Chronologically earliest is the excavated cave temple (No. 6) at Udayagiri bearing a dated inscription in the reign of Chandragupta II (Gupta year 82 = A. D. 401). The other noteworthy shrine here is No. 1, that is partly rock-cut and partly stone-built, a shallow pillared portico being added in front of the excavated cella. This style is just an immediate transition from the pure cave shrines to the structural ones. The portico, the carved doorway and the pillars with their *pūrṇa-ghaṭa* (full-vase) capitals show the typical features of the early Gupta style.

Almost identical to it in conception is the Gupta temple at Sānchī accordingly datable to the end of the fourth century. It is a beautiful little flat-roofed shrine, having small porch of four pillars in front of the cella. There is no raised path of *pradakshiṇā* yet introduced. The cornice moulding of the portico is carried round the otherwise plain walls of the *garbhagṛiha*. The Vishṇu temple (or locally called Kaṅkālī-devī temple) at Tigowā is also of the same design, with a flat-roof covered with slabs set together by overlapping grooves.

The characteristic features of this early temple group of Gupta style may be thus analysed :—

A square sanctum with a flat roof, plain interior, dressed stone masonry finely set but without any kind of mortar, a raised plinth the plan of which was divided into squares, the central square being occupied by the sanctum (*garbhagṛiha*), an exquisitely carved doorway decorated with foliage pattern, human figures and the figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā occupying the upper corners of the jambs. This last was a typically Gupta feature and the two river goddesses in this position

may have been derived from the *Sālabhañjikā*-figures which festooned the architraves of Buddhist *toraṇas*.[79] In front of the richly carved doorway was usually a shallow porch, which in later Gupta examples developed into a pillared portico and later on into a full-fledged *mukha-maṇḍapa*. Among other specific features are the shape of the pillars having a plain square base, many-sided shaft, and a capital of *pūrṇa-kalaśa* design, the system of rendering the architrave as a string-course running round the entire building, and all round courses of fine chaitya-windows or *gavāksha-vātāyana* patterns containing in their medallions figures of gods and goddesses or peeping male and female busts. (See Ills. 53-54, Textfig. 14.)

As to the flat roof, a stage can be pointed out in which it consisted merely of a large flat stone. An important example of this type is seen at Mukundarā; here the roof slab is carved on the inside with a bold lotus pattern (Ill. 50), as noted earlier, the type having been evolved in our opinion from the lotus-parasol on Bodhisattva images in the earlier *gandhakuṭī* type of shrines.

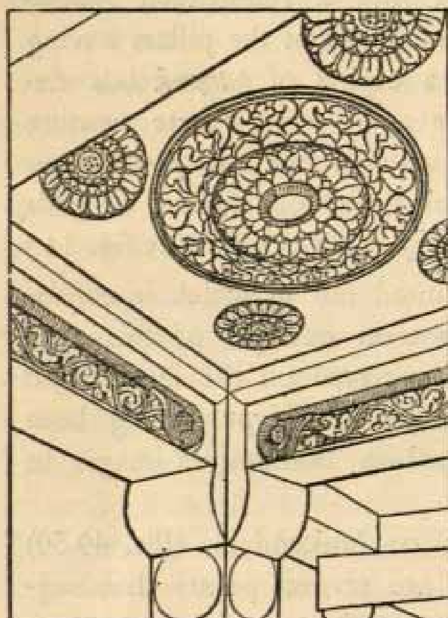
The moderate-sized temple at Darrā or Mukundarā (Ills. 49-50) doubtless belongs to the early group; there are several points that suggest its more or less independent type with several curious features.[80]

It stands on a raised plinth (44′×74′) with stepped approaches from the left and right corners of the front side. The temple facing east stands near the western side of the plinth. The *garbhagriha* consists of four square pillars, 5½ feet apart from each other. Each pillar is surmounted by a square capital with projections on the four sides covered with scroll-work. Above the two projections on the same side is a lintel covered by a flat stone of moderate size carved with a big full-blown lotus in the centre showing two bands of petals and a band of floral scroll-work. There are four similar but smaller lotuses in the four corners (Ill. 50, Textfig. 65).

On each of the three sides of the sanctum pilasters have been erected at a distance of 3′9″. The pillars are surmounted by capitals with three projections on which three lintels were placed, each covered by a rectangular flat stone carved with five lotuses on the inside.

On the front side two square pillars were erected in a line with the sanctum pillars at a distance of 5½ feet. These supported capitals and lintels and were covered with a flat top stone, so that on all sides of

the temple a continuous circumambulatory path was provided. Outside the *pradakshiṇā-patha* a stone course only 16″ high from the ground ran on three sides of the temple at a distance of 2′2″ from the pilasters.



Textfig. 65. Carved ceiling. Darrā temple.

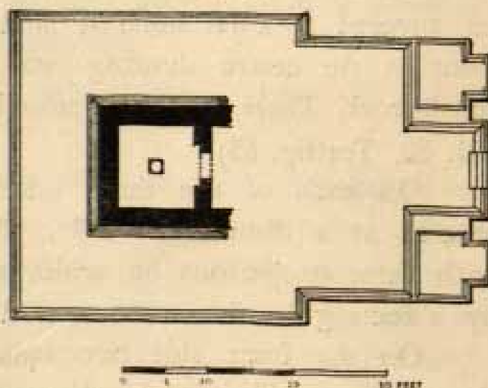


Textfig. 66. Loose stone slab from *toraṇa*. Darrā temple.

On the whole, the design of the temple is extremely simple. The architectural feature of the square flat top on four pillars for the focal *garbhagriha* is similar to the square parasol of the Bodhisattva images found at Maholī and Mathurā, placed above free-standing statues installed inside a small *gandhakuṭī* improvised for the purpose.

The Śiva Temple at Bhūmarā is a further elaboration on the Sānchī or Tigowā model, being erected on a high plinth and displaying an evolved architectural planning.

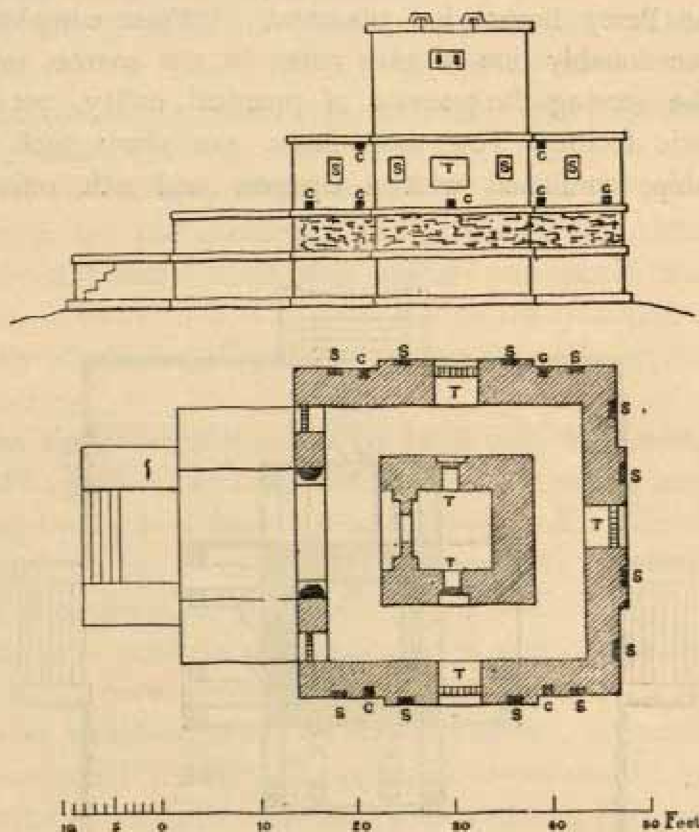
The main shrine was 35′ square, consisting of a cella (15′ 2″ square outside and 8′ square inside), enclosed by a seven feet wide cloister or covered *pradakshiṇā-patha* (Textfig. 67). It is built of finely dressed sandstone blocks in



Textfig. 67. Ground plan. Bhūmarā Śiva temple.

plain ashlar masonry without any mortar. The roof is composed of immense flat slabs. The walls of the *garbhagriha*, enshrining a huge Ekamukhī-liṅga (Ill. 11) are plain both inside and outside excepting the doorway on the west. The best part of the temple is doubtless its finely carved doorframe, showing river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā in the lower sections of the jambs, and figures of standing persons, flying Gandharvas, amorous couples and rich floral decorations.[81]

The earlier temple (of Pārvatī) at Nāchnā Kuṭhārā is similar to that at Bhūmarā, both as regards the planning and dimensions and the stone masonry techniques. Here the entire building including the front porch and the covered ambulatory path is in a much better state of preservation



Textfigs. 68-69. Plan and elevation. Pārvatī temple. Nāchnā Kuṭhārā.

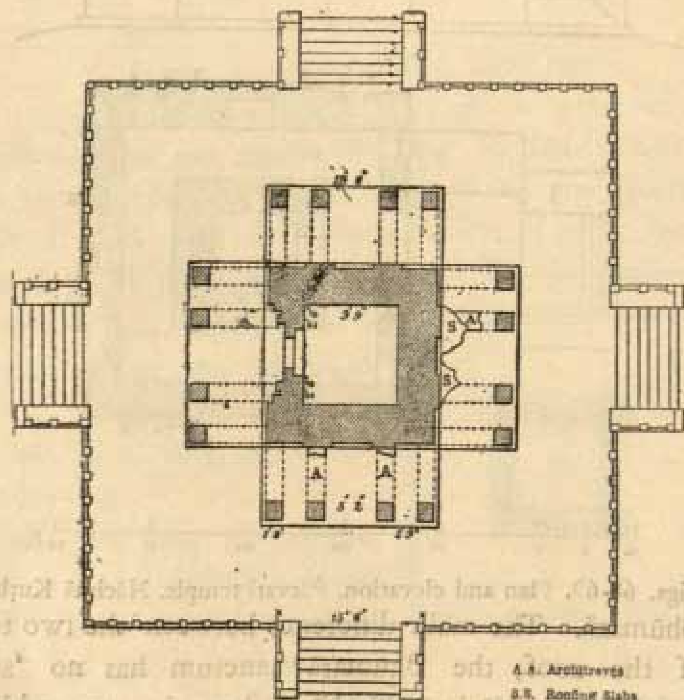
than that at Bhūmarā. The main difference between the two temples lies in the details of the roof; the Bhūmarā sanctum has no 'superstructure' over flat top, while at Nāchnā Kuṭhārā there is an additional, small square chamber above the sanctum (Textfigs. 68–69).[82]

The temples of Bhūmarā and Nāchnā Kuṭhārā appear to mark out the second stage of the Gupta temple architecture, when the temple consisted of the following generical features :—

A flat-topped square (or rather cubical) cella, but surrounded by a covered path of circumambulation (*pradakshiṇā-patha*); this covered path or cloister being lighted by trellises or perforated windows as at Nāchnā Kuṭhārā.

Other early temples belonging to this type are the Lāḍkhān at Aihole (Chālukya, A. D. 550) and the ruined temple at Baigarām (Bengāl).

The Daśāvatāra[83] temple at Devagaḍh is important in more ways than one. As Percy Brown has observed, "When complete this building was unquestionably one of rare merit in the correct ordering of its parts, all alike serving the purpose of practical utility, yet imbued with supreme artistic feeling. Few monuments can show such a high level of workmanship, combined with a ripeness and rich refinement in its



Textfig. 70. Plan. Vishṇu temple. Devagaḍh.

sculptural effect as the Gupta temple at Devagarh."[84] In it one finds the temple type (Textfig. 70) as perfected by the Gupta builders at their full glory. Its characteristic details may be put down as follows :—

1. The temple is placed in the centre of a high platform (measuring 55ft. 6 in. square). The style of its set-up was copied from the Stūpas like which the temple stands on a sufficiently raised terrace, square in section and approached by four axial steps on the four sides. Each of the staircases possessed a *chandra-śilā* (moonstone) as the lowermost step.
2. On the four corners, there were four subsidiary shrines on the ground level, approached from outside and dedicated to other deities of the pantheon, entire complex represented *pañchāyatana* concept, possibly it is the earliest example known of it.
3. The face of the plinth was very elaborately decorated with a running frieze of carved panels, suitably framed by short pilasters. There were two courses of the sculptural panels, the lower one of bigger (ht. 2′ 9″) and the upper one of smaller (ht. 15″) size. They exhibited a series of religious legends and scenes of mythology. This feature more or less corresponds to the Buddhist railing and similarly acquainted the visitor with the edifying tales of religious teaching.
4. The shrine itself is a modest building, with *garbhagriha* measuring 9′9″ square inside; the four walls (3′7″ thick) are relieved exteriorly by a carved doorway on the front and by three carved *rathikā*-panels on rest of the sides. They are held in position on each side by a framework of pilasters, lintel and a sill.
5. The best preserved portion of the temple and from the aesthetic point of view carrying the highest appeal is its doorway (Ill. 53) facing west (height 11′ 8″, breadth 10′ 9″; the actual entrance measuring 6′ 11″ × 3′4½″). The two door-jambs and the upper lintel reveal several remarkable features. The jambs are adorned with beautiful standing figures of male and female attendants (*pratīhārī*). These figures with their gorgeous flowing hair and elegant drapery rank amongst some of the most exquisite creations of the Gupta workmen. The portions above the figures have beautiful bands of foliage pattern or artistically carved scroll-work known as *patralatā* or *patrā*-

valī in contemporaneous Sanskrit literature. Of the other features, amorous couples (*dampatī*), dwarfish male figures (*pramathas*), the Tree of Prosperity (*Śrī-vṛiksha*) and bands of rosettes (*phullāvali*) are typical of Gupta architecture. The upper lintel has two special features to show : (1) in its centre it has a projecting image (*lalāṭa-bimba*) of the god Vishṇu seated on the serpent Śesha, and (2) the two ends of the lintel are adorned with the images of the river goddesses, Gaṅgā and Yamunā standing on their respective vehicles, the alligator and the tortoise. This fully agrees with the description of an entrance given by Varāhamihira, except the lucky birds (*māṅgalya-vihaga*), which adorn the door-jambs of the Dah Parbatiā temple in Assam and are mentioned in the *Bṛihatsaṁhitā* (56. 14-15).[85]

6. The framed and sculptured panels set in the walls show the following themes :—

(i) Gajendra-moksha, i. e. the god Vishṇu rescuing the lord of elephants from the clutches of a monster-size Nāga (Ill. 57).

(ii) Nara-Nārāyaṇa-tapaścharyā, i. e. performance of austerities by the sage Nara and Nārāyaṇa in their Himālayan hermitage at Badarīnātha (Ill.56).

(iii) Anantaśāyī Vishṇu, i. e. Vishṇu sleeping on the cosmic serpent Śesha (Ill. 55).

The style of such panels or images in exterior wall-niches continued as a common feature into the medieval temples. Originally it appears to have been an adaptation of the Stūpa decoration having four Buddha figures all round.

7. The entablature above the level of the doorframe and the *rathikā*-panels show a simple frieze of arched-window patterns running all round.

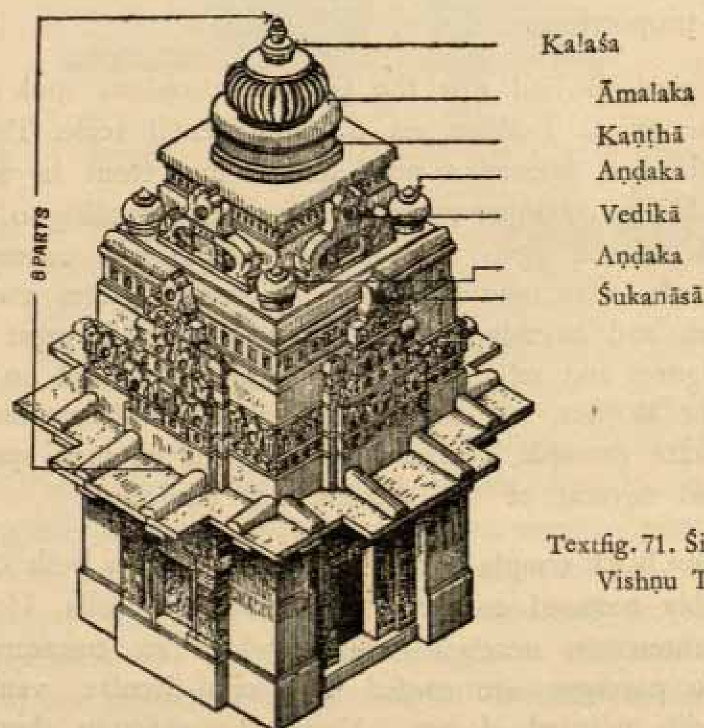
8. Over this, again, was projected, on strong cantilever beams (17″/12″ to 14″ / 12″ in section), four on each side, a deep and continuous flat canopy which effectively shaded the exquisite reliefs of the doorway and the remaining sides.

9. The roof is flat inside but supports above the cubical portion a *śikhara* comprising a pyramid of three storeys built in gradually receding tiers. The flat roof is a generical feature of Gupta architecture ; but the tower seems to indicate a further elaboration of this

structural element in the later part of the period (see. Ill. 52). The Devagaḍh *śikhara* was decorated with *chaitya*-window or *kīrtimukha* motifs in the centre on each side and provided with four corner-*āmalakas* and one big *āmalaka* on the top.

The provision above the sanctum of a flat-roofed cell or second storey, as we find in the Pārvatī temple at Nāchnā Kuṭhārā and the Lāḍkhān temple at Aihole, was possibly first introduced to indicate exteriorly the seat of the deity in the *garbhagriha*. However, this feature is believed to have made for the *śikhara* in the next phase of development.

Such a *prāsāda*, having more than one storey was called *bahubhūmika*,[86] the uppermost storey or *bhūmi* known as *agrabūmi*, crowned by a stone *āmalaka* and a finial. The additional storeys when multiplied in number appear to have lost their functional aspect and came to be merged or compressed into a tower-like superstructure



Textfig. 71. Śikhara (reconstructed). Vishṇu Temple. Devagaḍh.

that now represented a piling up of several superimposed gradually receding tiers or roofs. The temple at Devagaḍh shows the earliest

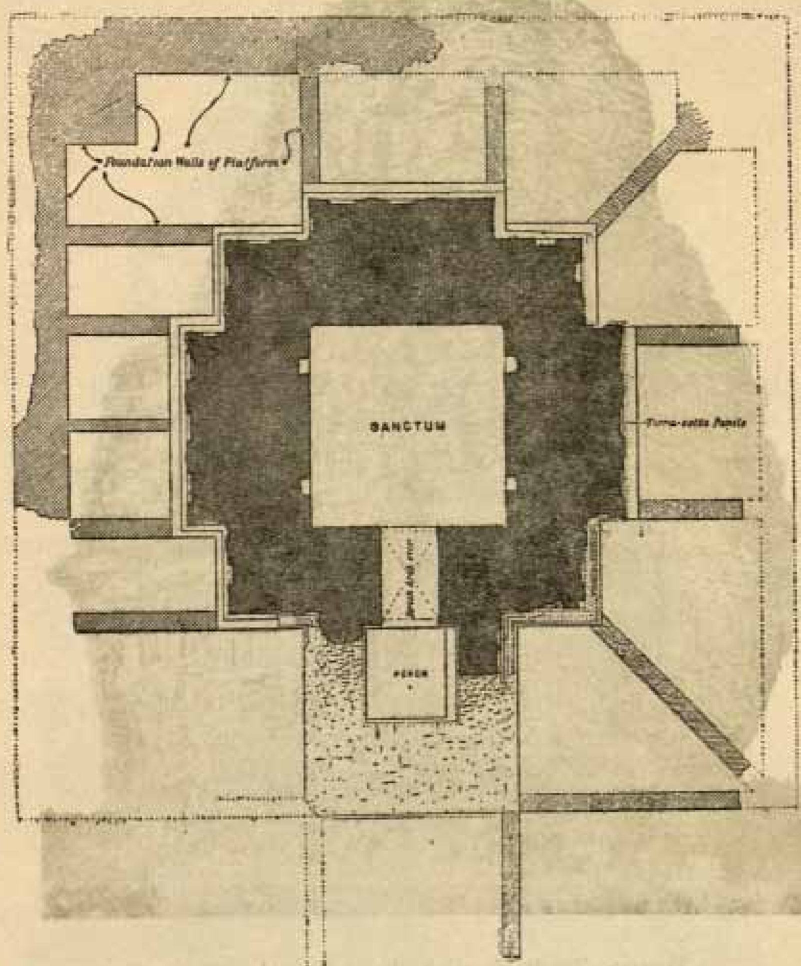
structural example known of such a *śikhara*, having a design of three superposed storeys that are built into piled up terraces or gradually receding *bhūmis*. The transition between these *bhūmis* is not abrupt, but brought about gradually by introducing curvature and mouldings at the points of junctions. In fact, the existence of each "false storey" was camouflaged in a skilful manner by showing corner-*āmalakas* at each stage of the terraced elevation of the superstructure. The *āmalaka*-stones also relieved to some extent the plainness of curves at suitable heights. A clear idea of the original contour of the Devagaḍh *śikhara* can be had from the outline replica of the temple carved on its doorframe ; see the reconstruction given here on this basis in Textfig. 71.

The topmost *bhūmi* marked at the pinnacle by a big *āmalaka*-stone and a finial contributed effectively to its height. This *śikhara*, showing a stepped out pyramidal form of very small dimensions, however, appears to have been the prototype of later medieval spires of huge proportions.

It seems logical to find that the Gupta coroplasts took full advantage of the terracotta medium on a monumental scale. Their love for moulded bricks had opened a new architectural front in which all the details of building technique were incorporated according to the best aesthetic standards of the age. The whole temple was conceived in terms of brick work, with moulded pillars, pilasters, friezes and reliefs. Large-sized plaques and moulded bricks decorated with a great number of designs and figures and religious themes were freely used on the exterior walls of the shrines, of which the temple at Bhītargāon stands as the earliest extant example, remarkable both for its high quality of clay sculpture and several of the architectural devices.

The Bhītargāon brick temple (Textfigs. 72-4, Ill. 60) "is built on a square plan with doubly recessed corners, and contains a cella, 15′ square, and a porch or anteroom, nearly 7′ square, which are connected by a passage. The two passages are roofed with semi-circular vaults, and the two rooms with pointed domes. Above the sanctum there is an upper chamber of less than half its size, which was perhaps originally covered by a vault of the same construction."[87]

The walls of the temple rise in bold mouldings and are conceived from top to bottom in terms of terracotta friezes and beautified



Textfig. 72. Ground plan. Vishṇu temple. Bhītargāon.

bricks.[88] The upper portions of the walls are decorated with a row of rectangular panels alternating with ornamental pilasters. The decoration on the bricks are exceedingly varied and beautiful, some of the typical ones being inverted lotus petals, rosettes, fret work, inter-locked chains, meanders and scrolls. The designs of the mouldings in the basement and the *śikhara*, and the vertical bands forming the façade, the sides and the doorframes are worthy specimens of the planning and executive skill of the builders. The Bhītargāon temple is known for possessing the earliest voussoir arch found in India.

The most important part of the temple is its pyramidal *śikhara*. It is, however, the earliest example of a brick superstructure, dating from the

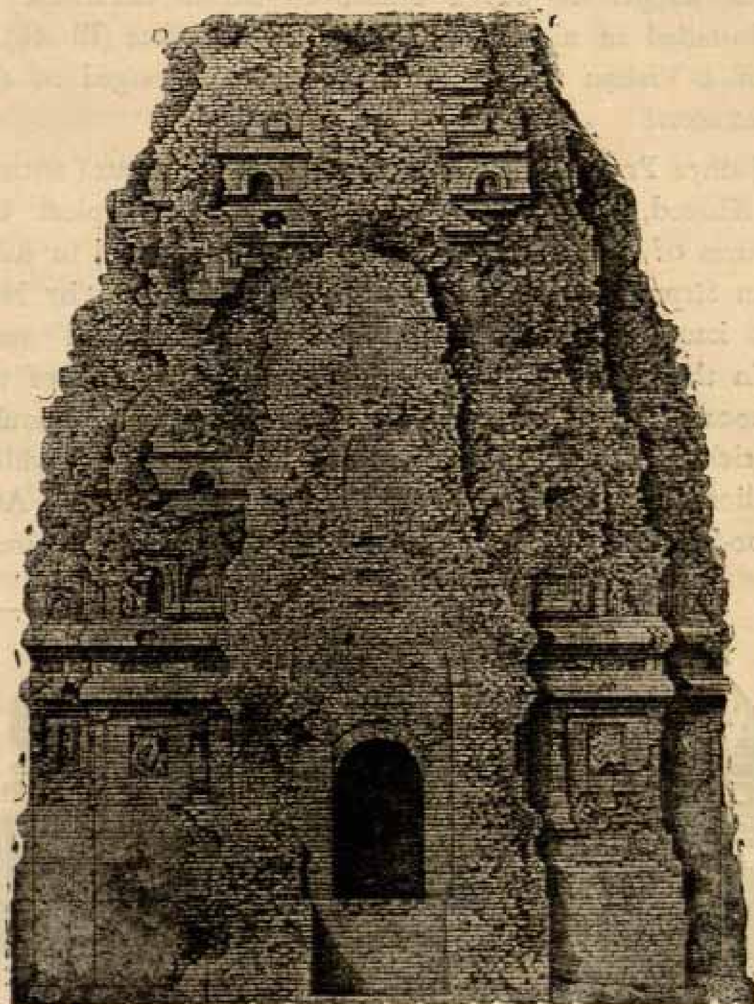


Textfig. 73. Back view. Brick temple. Bhitargāon.

early sixth century, and is only next in importance to the pyramidal stone tower at Devagaḍh. In the sixth or seventh century we do not yet have the tall curvilinear and light spire that came to be an essential feature of the Nāgara (or Indo-Aryan) style of architecture in the medieval temples of northern India.

Besides the great temple at Bhītargāon, only ruinous structures have survived at other centres. Of them the Śiva temple at Ahichchhatrā (Ill. 63) may be mentioned briefly. It is a massive brick structure unique of its kind in North India. On plan it was similar to the quadrangular Buddhist *stūpas* raised in several tiers, diminishing upwards like a gigantic

staircase.[89] The structure answers closely to what the *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* describes as an *eḍūka* built in three terraces (*bhadra-pīṭhas*), one above the other, with four stepped approaches and surmounted on



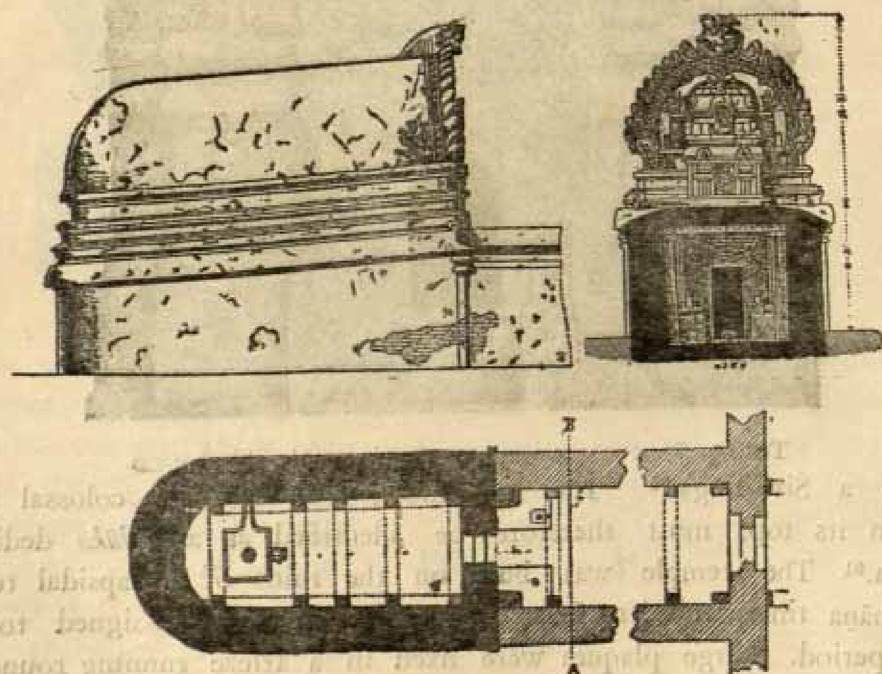
Textfig. 74. Front elevation. Brick temple. Bhitargāon.

top by a Śiva-liṅga.[90] The monument, still having a colossal Śiva-liṅga on its top, must therefore be identified as an *eḍūka* dedicated to Śiva.[91] The temple was built on the ruins of an apsidal temple of Kushāṇa times and its first construction may be assigned to the Gupta period. Large plaques were fixed in a frieze running round its upper terrace and the remaining ones may be assigned on the basis of their style to a period between A. D. c. 450 and 650. At the two sides

of the steps leading to the upper terrace of the temple, life-sized clay images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā were installed (see Ill. 47).

A very interesting brick monument was brought to light during excavations at Rājgir. It was a cylindrical shrine beautified with stucco sculptures installed in niches on the exterior surface (Ill. 48). [Possibly the ruins of a Vishṇu temple at Pawāyā also belonged to the terraced type of structures.]

In Madhya Pradesh, of the brick temples at Sīrpur (ancient *Śrīpura*), Rājim and Kharod, each has a stone doorway in typical Gupta style showing figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. The door-lintel in Rājim temple, 3 miles from Sīrpur, represents a bust of Śiva flanked by Nāga figures, whose tails knot and intertwine and make a bold and very effective pattern.[92] In the temple at Kharod the stone door-frame of the sanctum is a well-executed piece of sculpture. The inner frame mouldings and jambs are richly carved in conventional ornaments in which *makara*, lotus medallions and rising scrolls are most conspicuous. At each side of the door-frame is a well carved, life-size female figure, standing



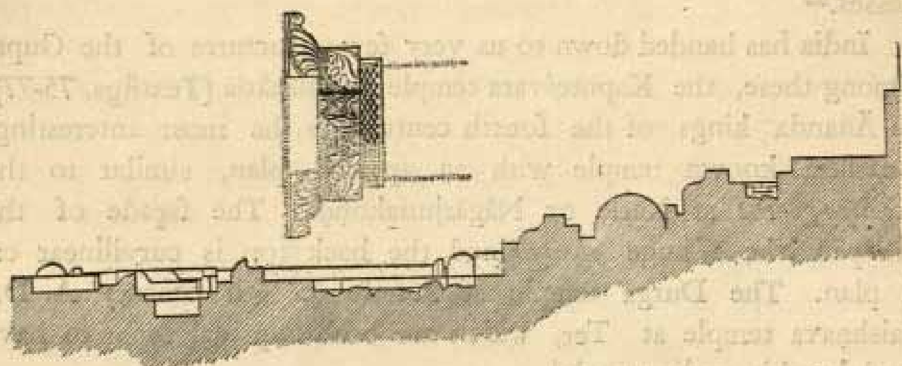
Textfigs. 75-77. Section, elevation and plan. Kapoteśvara Temple. Chezārlā. C. 4th cent. A.D.

under an umbrella and attended by a diminutive maid representing the river-goddesses.[93]

South India has handed down to us very few structures of the Gupta period. Among these, the Kapoteśvara temple at Chezārlā (Textfigs. 75-77), built by the Ānanda kings of the fourth century, is the most interesting. It is the earliest known temple with an apsidal plan, similar to the Buddhist *chaitya-gharas* at Kārle or Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. The façade of the *vimāna* is shaped like a huge *chaitya* and the back top is curvilinear on an apsidal plan. The Durga temple at Aihole (c. 6th century A. D.) and the Vaishṇava temple at Ter, which are both apsidal seem to have been inspired by this earlier model.

Let us now turn to Buddhist structural buildings. A vigorous school of Gandhāra sculpture associated with monumental Stūpas flourished in the earlier part of the Gupta period dating a little before and after 400 A. D. Stūpas, chapels and monasteries have been found at Jauliān, Chārsaddā and other ancient sites near Pushkalāvatī. At Mohrā Morādu an assembly hall, refectory, kitchen, store-room, bath room and laterine, associated with a religious establishment, indicate the luxurious mode of life of the monk-residents. The Sārnāth excavations have unearthed the remnants of a Buddhist temple and a number of monasteries. The latter usually consisted of a number of rooms round a courtyard, sometimes having chapels of their own.

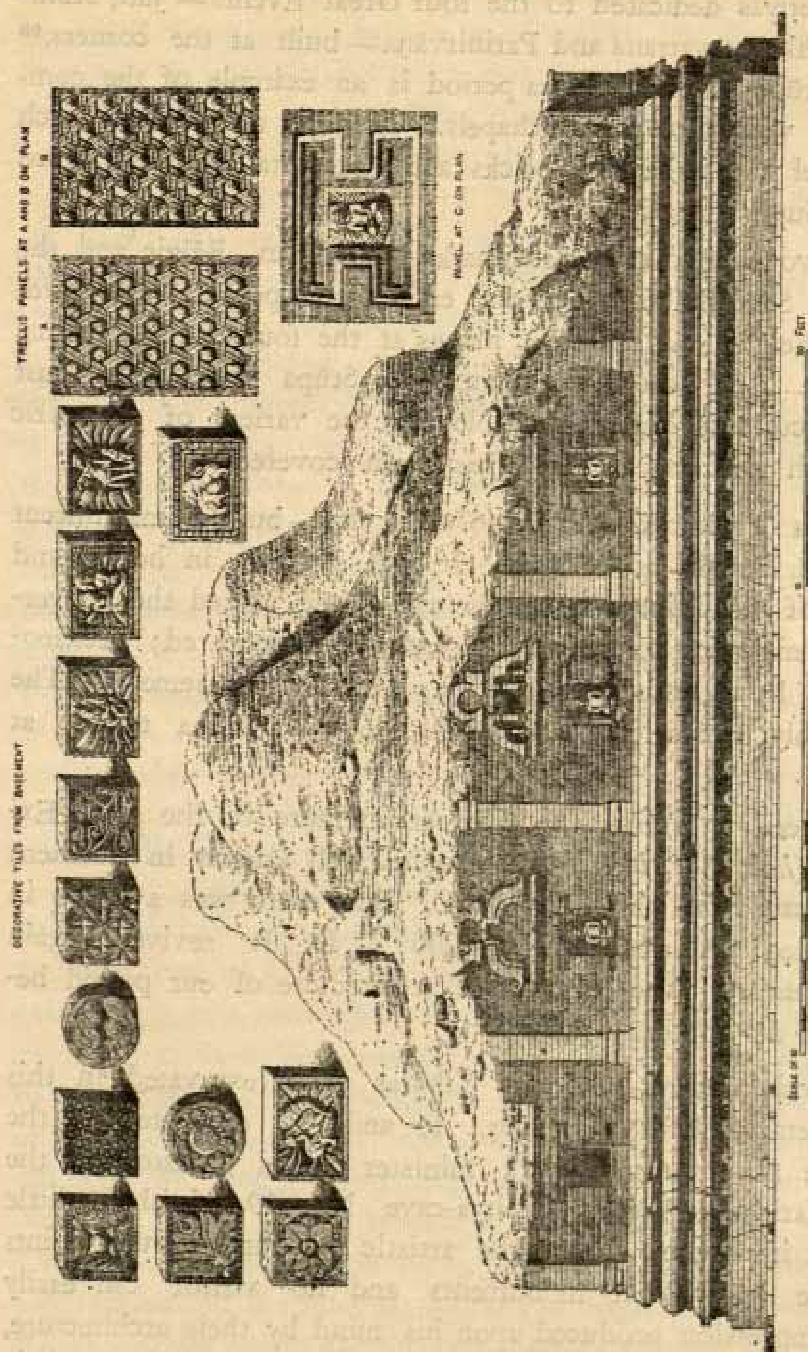
As indicated earlier, the style of big *rathikā*-panels or sculptures on the exterior walls of the Hindu temple, as it is first seen at Devagaḍh, was an adaptation of the Stūpa decoration having Buddha figures all round. Two other structural features also point to the relationship of the Gupta temple with Buddhist Stūpas : firstly, the high square platform with a stairway in the centre of each side and secondly, four small temples or sanctuaries at the four corners. Many earlier Indian Stūpas such as those at Bhallaṛ (Taxila) and Mīrpur Khās (Sindh) and others in Afghanistan stand on a single square or rectangular platform with axial approaches on one or four sides.[94] This is confirmed by the *Divyāvadāna* (pp. 243-44) which gives us an almost contemporaneous description of how a small *chaitya*, which is also called *stūpa*, was converted into a chapel of larger dimensions with four approaches (*sopāna*) on the four sides leading up to the terraces (*medhi*) of which there were three.



Textfig. 78

Textfig. 79

Plan and vertical section through centre of N face. Stūpa at Mirpur Khās.



Textfig. 80. Stūpa and its decorative panels. Mirpur Khās.

It had four Mahāchetiyas dedicated to the four Great Events — Jāti, Abhisambodhi, Dharmachakrapravartana and Parinirvāṇa — built at the corners.[95] The Mirpur Khās Stūpa of early Gupta period is an example of the combination of a Stūpa with three small chapels. There is a true brick arch in the central chapel and its carved bricks and terracotta Buddhas afford fine examples of Gupta plastic art.

One of the two Stūpas at Jarāsandha-kā-Baiṭhak in Rājgir and the Dhamekha Stūpa at Sārnāth belong to the end of our period. The latter one is 128 feet in height and has four niches at the four cardinal points for Buddha images. The scroll work on this Stūpa has evoked just praise and the structure is also remarkable for the variety of geometric patterns with which part of its area has been covered.

Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya (A. D. 467-473) had built a magnificent brick temple of the Buddha at Nālandā. It was 300 feet in height and evoked admiration of the Chinese travellers who later visited the University town.[96] This majestic structure has entirely disappeared; archaeological excavations have unearthed only its massive basement. The temple was probably similar to the well-known Buddha temple at Bodhagayā.

We now proceed to survey the cave architecture of the age. Excavation of caves (*leṇa*, Skt. *layaṇa*) was quite well known in northern India and the Deccan from about 250 B. C. But there was a break in this activity of three centuries after c. 200 A. D. It revived again by the fifth-sixth century. The main cave architecture of our period belongs to Ajaṇṭā and the Āndhra country.

At Ajaṇṭā, both Chaitya-halls and Vihāras were excavated in this period. Among them, Vihāra-caves Nos. 16 and 17, excavated in the last quarter of the fifth century by a minister and a feudatory of the Vākāṭaka king Harisheṇa,[97] and Chaitya-cave No. 19, finished little later, are the most important. From the artistic and architectural points of view these are magnificent monuments and no visitor can easily forget the grand impression produced upon his mind by their architecture, sculpture and paintings. They are undoubtedly among the best artistic monuments of the age in the Gupta-Vākāṭaka territory, and may therefore be briefly described here.

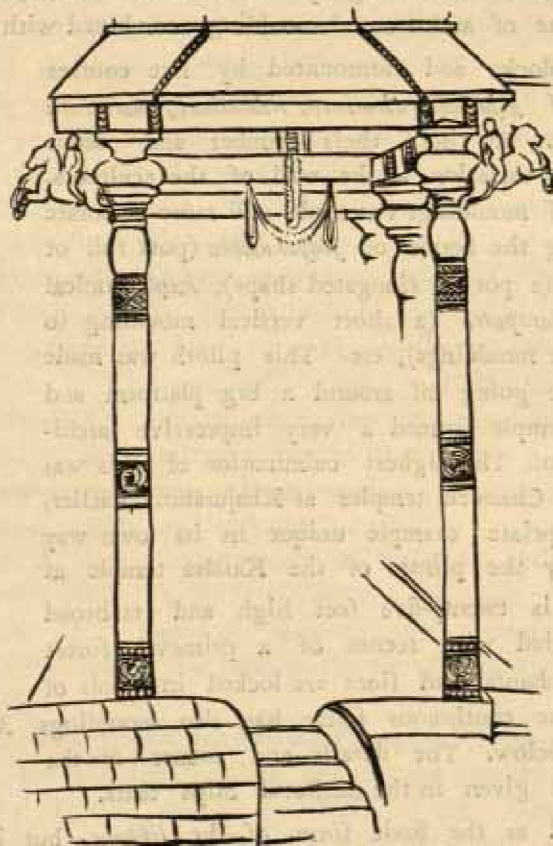
Chaitya-cave No. 19, like its earlier precursors, consists of a nave separated from aisles by a row of pillars, but it also shows many new features. In the earlier Chaitya-caves considerable use had been of wood for the purpose of beautifying the façade; here it has been discarded altogether. The rail ornament also disappears from the façade and is replaced by a double row of cornice decorated with Chaitya-window or *kīrti-mukha* motifs. The entrance is flat-roofed, supported by four pillars with a huge Chaitya-window above it separated by the cornice. The aisle pillars inside have fluted columns with pot-and-foliage capitals. But the most striking new feature of the cave is its zeal for the Buddha figure. In the earlier Chaitya-halls at Kārle and Nāsik, the Blessed One is nowhere to be seen in the human form; at Ajaṇṭā he can be seen in the human form at the façade, in the frieze of niches above the brackets, and carved on the monolithic Stūpa inside, which was the main object of worship. It was the new Mahāyāna belief which had brought about this transformation. The rock-cut Stūpa of this Chaitya-cave consists of a high cylindrical drum, decorated with standing or seated Buddha figures between pilasters crowned by graceful *makara* arches. The drum supports the globular dome, with the usual pavilion (*harmikā*), and a series of three umbrellas (*tri-chhatra*) one above the other.

Vihāra-caves Nos. 16 and 17 are justly famous for their painting, which will be discussed below; they are, however, equally interesting for their architecture. Cave No. 16 is a twenty-pillared cave, 65 feet square, having six residential cells for the monks on either side, two at either end of the verandah and two at the back. Between these two cells there is a rectangular sanctuary with a large figure of the Buddha, seated in *pralambapāda* posture, i. e. with feet hanging down. The beauty of the pillars is as remarkable as their variety, no two pillars being exactly alike. The general harmony of design and form, however, prevents variety from being obtrusive. Cave No. 17 is almost similar to Cave No. 16. It was long known as the Zodiac cave on account of the "Wheel of Life" (*Bhavachakra*) painted on the walls of its verandah. On account of the famous fresco paintings, these caves produce an effect which can be better experienced than described. All the walls were once covered with painted scenes from the life of the Buddha or the Jātakas, and the roof and the pillars beautified by arabesque and ornamental designs in bold outlines and pleasing colours.

The caves at Mogularājapuram, Undāvalli and Akkannamadanna, excavated under the Vishṇukuṇḍin kings, in the Āndhra country, also belong to this period. It is interesting to note that their plan is modelled on that of the Udayagiri caves in Central India, and not on that prevailing nearer home at Guṇṭāpalle, near Bezwādā. The architecture of these caves is therefore simple. The façades at Mogularājapuram show two pillars in the centre, two pilasters, one on either side, and a *dvārapālaka* at each end beside the two pilasters. The pillars and pilasters are simple and massive, being square in section at the base and the top, and octagonal in the central part. The corbels are rounded at either end, and judging from the less weathered ones, fluted. Right above the pillars are Chaitya-windows with heads introduced in them. The floral designs flanking the Chaitya-windows with the head on the top is the precursor of similar pattern on Pallava Chaitya-windows. Above this is sometimes a row of animals spiritedly carved. On entry the cave presents a verandah with or without an additional row of pillars beyond which is a single cell or triple cells forming the sanctuary. The Undāvallī caves have similar architectural features, but are three-storeyed.

Secular Architecture—Secular buildings of our period are unfortunately not preserved,[98] but some idea of early palaces can be formed by a study of their sculptural representations at Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. They were imposing structures several storeys high. The types of windows included the arched one with finial, the rectangular one and the latticed. Different kinds of balustrades are shown; pilasters and polygonal pillars have fine capitals, some on the model of the earlier bell-shaped ones with *kalaśa* motif at the base. The roof was sometimes shaped after the hood of a wagon, sometimes after a simple rectangular hut, and sometimes circular with a curvilinear top and a single tapering finial. The second type was probably known as *śālā* and the third *kūṭāgāra*. Both are known and described in early literary accounts of palaces. Terraces and balconies were sometimes open and sometimes canopied, the latter being known as *valabhī*. There were separate entrances and exits with fine arched *toraṇa* decoration, as in the case of the gateways at Sanchi, which were decorated with fresh garlands on festive occasions. These entrances relieved a boundary wall much in the same way as in some of our modern high class residential buildings.

We may also form some idea of the royal pavilions (Textfig. 81) from the mural paintings at Ajaṇṭā. Moderate in size (*nātimahataḥ*) they were raised on four cylindrical pillars (*maṇi-daṇḍikā-chatushṭaya*, as described



Textfig. 81. Outline drawing of a royal pavilion. From a painting at Ajaṇṭā. The structure corresponds to the description given by Bāṇabhaṭṭa in the *Kādambarī* and the several terms are explained in the text; the slender posts bear the appropriate name *māṇidaṇḍikā*.

by Baṇa), decorated with golden festoons (*kanakaśṛiṅkhalā-niyamita*), and from their roof was pendant a clustered string of big pearls (*avalambita-sthūla-muktākalāpaka*).[99] Under the canopy was placed the royal seat (*paryaṅkikā*), a foot-stool and other furniture. This formed the royal seat in private or public audience hall (*āsthāna-maṇḍpa*), which was tastefully decorated.[100] Literary evidence further shows that the palace apartments were usually decorated with paintings; not only palaces but even the houses of rich citizens were furnished with separate picture galleries (*chitrasadma*) and concert halls (*saṅgītaśālā*).[101]

74. P. Brown, *Indian Architecture, Buddhist and Hindu* (1st edn.), p. 54.
75. 'Vishṇorivasyānavadhāraṇīyamīdṛiktatyārūpamiyattayā vā' / *Raghuvaṁśa* XIII. 5.
76. See my article "Lalita Kalā," *Mārg*, vol. IV, No. 2, pp. 9-10, figs. 13-14.
77. The next stage is seen in high plinths of about the same size but organised with better sense of architectural mouldings combined with a triple basement of heavy stone blocks and surmounted by five courses (*pañchathara*) of *gajathara, aśvathara, siṁhathara, narathara* and *haṁsathara*. At times their number and order was subject to variation at the will of the sculptors. The number of mouldings was made still more elaborate by introducing the forms of *jāḍyakumbha* (pots full of water), *kalaśa* (a pot of elongated shape), *kaṇī* (conical moulding), *antarapatra* (a short vertical moulding to separate bigger mouldings), etc. This plinth was made of solid stone going all around a big platform and in a Hindu temple formed a very impressive architectural portion. The highest culmination of this was reached in the Chandela temples at Khajurāho. Earlier, a very appropriate example unique in its own way is afforded by the plinth of the Kailāsa temple at Ellorā which is twenty-five feet high and its broad base is occupied with scenes of a primeval forest in which elephants and lions are locked in trials of strength and the continuous frieze has also mouldings above and below. The details and names of the mouldings are given in the medieval Śilpa texts.



Mahāpīṭha showing the 'Five Courses' or *Pañchathara*.

78. This remained as the basic form of the *śikhara*, but in some of the great temples there was a gradual evolution into five or seven storeys as we find in the Liṅgarāja temple of Orissa and in the Khajurāho temples. One thing happened especially, namely, an increase in the number of *śikharas* on the several *maṇḍapas* as the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* (main maṇḍapa), *nṛitya-maṇḍapa* (song and dance hall) and *mukhamaṇḍapa* (porch). The one feature was that the height of the *śikhara* on the main temple was double that of the *śikhara* on the second pavilion or the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* and this was indicated by a moulding in the centre of high tower where the figure of the lion was placed in a rampant position. In the South Indian temples the *śikhara* had its greatest elaboration known as *gopuram* and having the basic architectural form of a vaulted roof with a dome on it. The *gopuram* was the name given to the four gateway entrances on the four sides of the main shrine and their place was in the surrounding wall but a tower on the main temple also took the form of a *gopuram* with a vaulted roof surmounted by a

cupola of round dome topped by a heavy stone *āmalaka* and *kalaśa*. The evolution of the *śikhara* in the medieval period in the Eastern, Southern, Western and Central Indian temples followed its own conventions and their details are recorded in the Śilpa texts. The last portion of the spire was the *āmalaka* or ribbed flattened top surmounted by a *kalaśa* topped by a finial (*stūpī*) and a banner (*dhvaja*). The idea of a *stūpī* and *dhvaja* was accepted both by the Brāhmaṇas and the Jainas for their respective temples.

The temple evolved as the complete form of a deity conceived as a human being with his various bodily portions in a vertical form from the feet to the head including the crest. We especially know such parts as the feet (*pāda*), shanks (*jaṅghā*), legs, waist (*kaṭi*), stomach (*medhya*), breast (*uras*), shoulder (*skandha*), head (*śikhara*) and crest (*śikhā*). There are many views about the symbolism of the Hindu temple, but the one rooted in religious and mythological aspects is that it is the abode of the deity manifested in human form. The deity is the prāṇic symbol and the image is its concrete, material aspect. Therefore, in all ceremonies of consecration the last one is that of *prāṇapratishṭhā* or the incarnation of the prāṇic power in the material image. Then only it becomes a Deva worthy of receiving worship.

79. Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture* (1st edn.), p. 55.
80. V. S. Agrawala, "A new Gupta temple at Darrā in Malwa," *J. U. P. H. S.*, vol. XIII (1950), pp. 196-7; *Studies in Indian Art*, pp. 226-7.
81. R. D. Banerji, *The Śiva Temple at Bhumara* (ASI. Memoirs No. 16, Calcutta, 1924); also his, *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, pp. 137-8.
82. Ibid., pp. 138 ff.
83. V. S. Agrawala, "The Gupta temple at Devagarh," *Art and Thought*, pp. 51-4; *Studies in Indian Art*, pp. 220-25. The temple was dedicated to Vishṇu. The *lalāṭa-bimba* shows Vishṇu seated on Ananta ; the *rathikā* panels illustrate Vaishṇava legends, etc. The popular name Daśāvatāra is derived from the scenes appearing on the plinth and exhibiting Vishṇu's incarnations, e. g. Trivikrama, Rāma, Kṛishṇa, etc.
84. P. Brown, *Indian Architecture*, p. 58.
85. Tripañchasaptanavabhiḥ śākhābhistatpraśasyate /
adhaḥ śākhāchaturbhāge pratīhārau niveśayet // 14 //
śeshaṁ māṅgalyavihagaiḥ śrī-vṛikshaiḥ svastikairghaṭaiḥ /
mithunaiḥ patravallībhiḥ pramathai śchopaśobhayet // 15 // Ch. 56.
86. Cp. *Harshacharita* (NS. edn.), p. 5; *The Deeds of Harsha*, p. 8
87. *A. S. I., A. R.*, 1908-09, p. 8.
88. Cunningham, *A. S. R.*, vol. IX, p. 40.
89. Cf. the description of a monumental (*maheśākhya*) Stūpa with three terraces (*tri-medhi*) in the *Divyāvadāna*, pp. 243 ff.
90. *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* III. 34. 1-4; also A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Indian Architectural Terms," *J. of the American Oriental Society*, 48 (1928), p. 270.

91. An earlier reference to numerous *edūkas* worshipped all over the country occurs in the *Mahābhārata* (III. 190. 65-67); the critical edition from Poona gives a variant of the name as *jārūka*, apparently a Sanskritised form of *ziggurat* with which these buildings seem to have had structural resemblance.
92. *A. S. I.*, *A.* R., 1909-10, p. 14, fig. 3.
93. Cousens, "Ancient brick temples in the Central Provinces," *A. S. I.*, *A.* R., 1909-10, p. 16, pl. IV (b).
94. Cf. Coomaraswamy, *Hist. of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 205.
95. *Divyāvadāna* (Cowell's edn.), pp. 243-44.
96. Cf. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World* (London, 1906), vol. II, pp. 167 ff.; Coomaraswamy, *Hist. of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 82.
97. Inscriptions on their walls give the names of the donors and the ruling kings, besides the copper-plates found inside the caves.
98. It is possible, as suggested by Dr. Coomaraswamy, that the two-storeyed pillared hall excavated in rock at Uparakot in the Junāgaḍh District, may have been an underground summar chamber of a palace. It has a bath attached to it.
99. Kālidāsa mentions it as *'chatuḥstambha-pratishṭhita-vitāna'* (*Raghuvaṁśa* XVII. 9). Bāṇa is more explicit in his description of such a pavilion (*Kādambarī*, P. L. Vaidya edn., p. 9; also *'chatuḥstambhamaṇḍapikā'*, p. 127).
100. Cf. the description of the audience halls in the *Harshacharita* and *Kādambarī* of emperor Harsha and king Śūdraka.
101. For further evidence on civil architecture in the Gupta period, see my *The Deeds of Harsha* (Varanasi, 1969), Appendix I, and *Chaturbhāṇī* (Bombay, 1960), pp. 171-76.

VII
PAINTING

No description of Gupta art can be complete without a reference to the highly developed art of painting. The literature of this period tells us that the art of painting was an accomplishment which every man and woman of culture desired to attian. Kālidāsa and Bāṇa often make use of similes drawn from technical terms used in painting. Thus while describing Pārvatī's first bloom of maidenhood the poet observes that she looked like a painting on which the final outline had been drawn (*unmīlitaṁ tūlikayeva chitram*, *Kumārasambhava* I. 32). In Sanskrit dramas and romances portrait painting had become almost a convention and many lovers were united through the medium of portraits. It seems that even the kings, though very busy in the affairs of state, could spare time to cultivate this graceful art. Duḥshyanta is shown painting the portrait of Śakuntalā in separation on a board (*Śāk.*, Act VI). The princes received their training in drawing and painting as part of a general scheme of education.

The Gupta age was also marked by the preparation of technical texts on art, architecture and painting. The *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* devotes a special section to painting (Part III, chs. 36-43, Chitrasūtra). The text gives us the interrelation between painting, dancing and music, the common point of which is rhythm, and then detailed instructions as regards surface preparation in fresco painting, different kinds of colours and methods to employ them. Then follow sections on the technique of stippling and the rudiments of shading. Points of special aesthetic interest are also emphasised. Thus the beauty of line is said to be the special point of appreciation by the master artists; the connoisseurs take delight in stippling and the rudiments of shading; colouring is not of such great importance. The aesthetic ideal of pictorial art in this period has been expressed by Yaśodhara, the commentator of Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, in the following couplet :—

Rūpabhedaḥ pramāṇāni bhāvaṁ lāvaṇyayojanam /
Sādṛiśyaṁ varṇikābhaṅgaḥ shaḍete chitramaṅgakam //

The appraisal of forms, correct proportion, maintaining of proper aesthetic interest, the beauty of touches, realism, and the proper use of colours, these are the constituents of the pictorial art. The truth of this dictum is borne out by the art of Ajaṇṭā, which is a living testimony to India's great pictorial conventions.

The celebrated examples of Gupta painting are preserved in the wall frescoes of the Ajaṇṭā caves, the Bāgh caves in Mālwā, and the rock-cut chambers at Sigiriya in Ceylon.

The caves at Ajaṇṭā, twenty-nine in number, are excavated in the face of an almost perpendicular scarp of rock about 250 feet high, sweeping round in a semi-circular curve. Caves Nos. 9, 10, 19, 26 are Chaitya-halls and the rest are Vihāras or monastic residences. Originally the majority of the caves were embellished with paintings but now only in six of them, Nos. 1, 2, 9, 10, 16, 17, paintings have survived. Caves 9 and 10 show the earliest specimens of Indian painting (c. 1st century B. C.) after which for about 300 years there is a gap in our evidence. According to Tārānātha there was a revival of the arts of sculpture and painting about the Gupta period under the artist Bimbasāra whose works were specially wonderful and equal in merit to those of the "gods". This was styled the Madhyadeśa school.[102]

On the technical side the surface of these paintings was prepared in a very simple way. Pulverised rock, cowdung, earth, and chaff were mixed and the resultant composition was thoroughly pressed on the rather porous surface of the volcanic trap-rock. The surface was then levelled with a trowel and after it was dried the drawings in bold outline were directly done by the artists in red ochre (*dhāturāga-ālekhana*). The colours were very simple. Red ochre, yellow ochre, indigo, lapis lazuli (*rājāvarta, rājavarda*), lamp black and chalk were used very effectively. There was no attempt at modelling though at times shading was done by dotting and cross-lines. High-light at times was added on the ornaments or nose to give them prominence. The artist at Ajaṇṭā did not bother himself with the detailed representation of the architecture and whatever architectural details have been introduced were with a view to enhance the effectiveness of the composition.

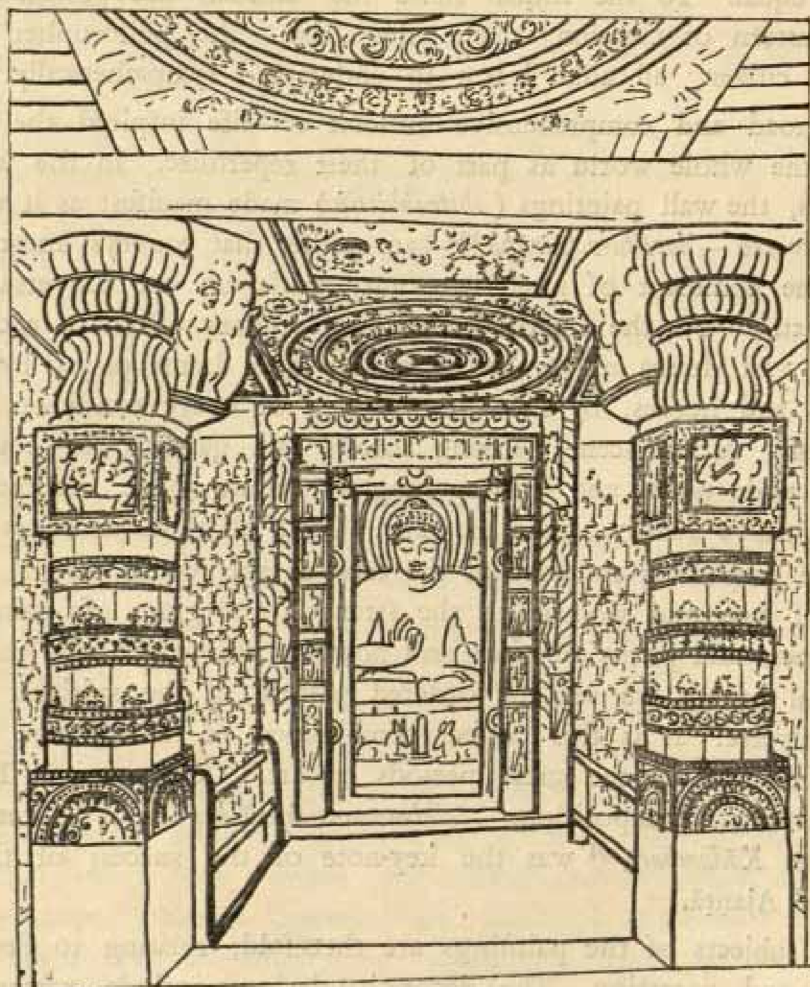
In the sylvan retreat of the Vāghorā where nature reigns supreme the great artists drew their inspiration. Nature to the Indian artist has

appealed not as a turbulent force, but in her gentler aspects. The flowering trees, quietly flowing streamlets and the roaming denizens of the forest have received unqualified appreciation from him. The elephants, deer, monkeys and the mean hare are represented with utmost sympathy. In drawing the fighting and charging bulls the artists of Ajaṇṭā and Bāgh have no equal. To the Indian mind the animals are part and parcel of that pattern of creation which the artist, the philosopher and the intelligent citizen, all alike learnt to understand sympathetically.

A broad and comprehensive outlook on life inspired the painters to greet the whole world as part of their repertoire. In the words of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the wall paintings (*chitrabhittiḥ*) made manifest as it were the whole universe—*darśita-viśvarūpā*,[103]—an epithet that conveys most appropriately the comment of a contemporary critic on the universal nature of that art. "On the hundred walls and pillars of these rock-carved temples a vast drama moves before our eyes, a drama played by princes and sages and heroes, by men and women of every condition, against marvellously varied scene, among forests and gardens, in courts and cities, on wide plains and in deep jungles; while above, the messengers of heaven move swiftly across the sky. From all these emanates a great joy in the surpassing radiance of the face of the world, in the physical nobility of men and women, in the strength and grace of animals and the loveliness and purity of birds and flowers; and woven into this fabric of material beauty we see the ordered pattern of the spiritual realities of the universe. It is this perfect combination of material and spiritual energy which marks the great periods of art." (Rothenstein) This spirit of universal composition —*tribhuvana-sampuñjana* as it is termed by Bāṇa in the *Kādambarī*,[104] was the key-note of the success of the great masters of Ajaṇṭā.

The subjects of the paintings are threefold, relating to decoration, portraiture and narration. The decorative designs include patterns and scrolls (*patrāvalī*), figures of animals, flowers and trees. Their variety according to Griffiths is infinite, carried into smallest details so that repetition is very rare. Graceful figures of fabulous creatures and mythological beings, such as Suparṇas (with a human bust joined to the body of a bird), Garuḍas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Apsarases, have been used to fill spaces.[105]

Of the portraits the central figures are those of the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Incidents from the life of Gautama Buddha are freely painted. The most beautiful of the paintings are those which treat of the legends relating to the earthly life of the Buddha — vigorous and exu-



Textfig. 82. Shrine doorway of Cave 2, Ajaṇṭā.

berant, natural and aspiring towards an ideal. The great Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara in Cave I shows the highest attainment in the way of figure painting (Ill. 69). We may recognise it as the very acme of Asiatic pictorial art. The narrative scenes are mostly from the Jātakas, e. g., the Viśvantara, Shaḍdanta, Śibi Jātaka, etc.

The paintings in Cave 16 date from about 500 A. D. and are slightly earlier than those in Cave 17. The scene known as the 'Dying Princess' in Cave 16 has received unstinted praise from Griffiths, "For pathos and sentiment and the unmistaken way of telling its story this picture, I consider, cannot be surpassed in the history of art. The Florentine could have put better drawing and the Venetian better colour but neither could have thrown greater expression into it."[106] In Cave 17 we find a considerable amount of work of the narrative style still preserved and the cave has been called literally a picture gallery illustrating some of the most engrossing episodes in the birth, life and death of the Buddha. The art is more graphic and less ideal. Mr. Havell gives the mead of praise to the charming Mother and Child group in Cave 17 which he considers as the most attractive specimen of Ajaṇṭā art. The scenes of a hunt of lions and black buck and of a hunt of elephants in Cave 17 are considered to be exceptionally fine work. According to Mrs. Herringham these pictures are composed in a light and shade scheme which can scarcely be paralleled in Italy before the seventeenth century and the whole posing and grouping is curiously natural and modern.

The paintings of Caves 1 and 2 (Textfig. 82) are the latest of the series which may be dated to about the early seventh century. The special merit of individual figures in Cave 2 consists in clever drawing which shows the artist to have apparently gone out of his way to invent specially difficult poses. The woman standing with her left leg bent up and the swinging figure of lady Irandatī are very pleasing. A large picture in Cave 1 shows the Indian king Pulakeśin II receiving an embassy from the Persian king Khusrū Parvez (Skt. Suśrava Paravijayī). This event must have taken place between A. D. 626 and 628. Several drinking groups in Cave 1 show connection with the great embassy picture. These seem to illustrate Khusrū and his queen Shirin drinking together. The faces, the drapery and other articles are clearly of Persian influence.

The paintings at Bāgh[107] in Mālwā represent only an extension of the Ajaṇṭā school and in variety of design, vigorous execution and decorative quality seem to have ranked as high as those at Ajaṇṭā (see Ill. 70). The majority of them are of a secular nature. In two of the groups the subject is extremely gay, illustrating the performance of the *hallīsaka* dance, a musical drama acted by a troupe of women

led by a man. They are elaborately dressed, singing and dancing with considerable freedom (Textfig. 83).

The art of Ajaṇṭā and Bāgh shows the Madhyadeśa school of painting at its best. The assurance and delicacy of lines, the brilliancy of colours and the richness of expression informed with a feeling of buoyant and pulsating life, have rendered this art supreme for all times.



Textfig. 83. The *hallīsaka* dance circle. Painting on facade of Caves 4-5 at Bāgh.

It captured in itself the best traditions of the art renaissance at home and set up traditions which travelled to far off countries, such as Central Asia, China, Korea, Japan and Burma. It became the cosmopolitan art of the Buddhist world and seems to have gone with Buddhism wherever it went. The discovery of frescoes in Central Asia, in Khotan, at Turfan, at Tunhuang have only served to focus greater attention on the frescoes of Ajaṇṭā. The frescoes at Bāmiyān in Afghanistan of which the earliest specimens go back to the fifth or sixth century A. D. exhibit a strange medley of Indian, Iranian and Chinese influences. Similarly mural

paintings of predominantly Indian type recalling Gupta and Pāla models were found in the Buddhist monastery at Fondukistan, east of Bāmiyān. Aurel Stein discovered Buddhist wall-paintings from a number of sites in Central Asia—Miran, Dandan Uiliq, Niya, etc.—in which Indian influences had mingled with those from China, Iran and the Classical world. The task of reproducing, identifying, interpreting and lastly assimilating the paintings with all their rich cultural contents is fraught with great significance for India's newly awakened national self. As in the past so also in future the inspiration of this great art may serve as the fountain-head for new cultural movements.

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102. Tārānātha also refers to the Western school of painting with Śārṅgadhara as the principal artist born in the reign of Śilāditya Guhila; this was the precursor of the Jaina and the Rājasthānī painting. With the rise of the Apabhraṁśa language under the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire this school also seems to have attained a dominant position. Tārānātha's Eastern school was the Pāla school of Vārendra inspired by the artists Dhīmān and his son Bitapāla, under the Pāla rulers Dharmapāla and Devapāla (9th century).

103. *Kādambarī*, sec. 44.

104. *Kādambarī*, sec.191 : 'chitrakarmachhalenāvalokanakutūhalasaṁpuñjitena tribhuvanena'. Also refer for this literary motif, in *Kādambarī*, sec. 85 : 'chitralekhadarśitavichitrasakalatribhuvanākāram'); Daṇḍī's *Avantisund rī* (Trivandrum, 1954) : 'jagattrayālekhyavichitrāśchitrabhittayaḥ'; *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (III. 35.5): 'chitre trailokyānukṛitiḥ smṛitā'.

105. Cf. *Kādambarī* (sec. 44) describing the painted halls of Ujjayinī—'surāsuragandharvavidyādharoragādhyāsitābhiśchitraśālābhiralaṁkṛitā.'

106. Quoted by Smith in his *Hist. of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, p. 286.

107. *The Bagh Caves*, pls. XVI-XVIII, and A–I.

13

VIII

GENERAL ESTIMATE

The characteristic features of the Gupta art are refinement, naturalness, simplicity of expression and a dominant spiritual purpose, which ensemble have given it an unchallanged greatness for all times. In the first place this art is marked by refinement and restraint which are the signs of a highly developed cultural taste and aesthetic enjoyment. The artist no longer relies on volume to give the impression of grandiose forms, but focusses his attention on elegance which is not lost in the exuberance of ornaments. The keynote of his art is restraint which eschews heaviness. The truth is at once apparent if we compare the standing life-size figure of the Gupta Buddha of Yaśadinna with the colossal standing Bodhisattva in the Sārnāth Museum, both from Mathurā in red sandstone. The exuberance and whirlpool movement of Amarāvatī marbles yielded place to an aesthetic sobriety in the treatment of the drapery, ornaments and other elements of decoration. The transparent drapery revealing the nudity of feminine form in the Kushāṇa period now serves a more edifying purpose, viz., to enhance the loveliness of the modulating lines of the figure. The ponderous ornaments on Kushāṇa figures enhance the effect of volume, but betray styles in primitive fashion, whereas the purpose of the Gupta ornaments by their lightness and delicate workmanship is to impart a graceful touch to the body which is so restful to the eyes. Whatever emerges from the hands of the Gupta artist appears perfectly natural, there is no place for over-elaboration. It is not the product of a craftman's mechanical skill but the result of the discriminating taste of a true artist who is conscious of his work and is master of his technique. For the first time we could perhaps rightly say that art had been elevated to the status of fine art, and it is possible in the words of Kālidāsa to designate the creations of the Gupta art by the term '*Lalita-kalā*' (*Raghu.*, VIII. 67).

Another characteristic of Gupta art is the concept of Beauty for which we have the very appropriate term '*Rūpam*', used again by the same great poet. Beauty of the male and female forms springing from

the culture of mind and body, is the craving of the Gupta citizen. Every one seems to have been under the influence of a grand movement to live in and to work for the loveliness of human body, and the fashions and fancies of that age bespeak a highly sophisticated sense for personal decoration. The gorgeous wigs, the curls arranged in the sytle of a peacock's feathers and the extremely charming style of honey-comb coiffure bear testimony to the extremely developed art of hair dressing. These coiffures have been freely represented in sculptures and paintings, and we can still visualise many a lovely fashion in hair dressing preserved to our own times in the paintings of Ajaṇṭā. The black masses of hair beautified with white flowers and fastened with spotless wreaths (e. g. Textfig. 84) still retain their power to thrill and excite.



Textfig. 84. From a painting. Cave I. Ajaṇṭā.

The men and women in this art-loving age applied themselves to the worship of the beautiful form in many ways. Aesthetic culture, however, did not weaken the strong structure and stamina of life or bedim its supreme objective by giving up to a riotous worship of the senses. Art was worshipped in order to engender an elevating and ennobling influence on life. Its aim was to deepen the consciousness of the soul and awaken it to a new sense of spiritual joy and nobility. Kālidāsa, as the supreme genius and poet of this age has expressed this attitude of life to beauty in a concise sūtra which is addressed to Pārvatī, the very embodiment of personal charm, by Śiva before the two are married : "O fair damsel ! the popular saying that beauty does not signify sin is full of unexceptionable truth."[108]

The path of Beauty is the path of Virtue : this appears be to the guiding impulse of life in the Gupta age. To create lovely forms and harness them to the needs of higher life, this golden harmony made Gupta art a thing of such perpetual and deep attraction.

This leads us to the third distinguishing feature of Gupta art, namely its profound religious and spiritual appeal, its basic inspiration from a higher source investing it not only with great charm but also with universal and lasting significance.

The epic of the Buddh's life which the master artists painted on a colossal scale in the caves at Ajaṇṭā has become for all times the standing commentary on the grand ordered patterns of good and evil manifesting themselves in each individual's life and governing also the whole world. The painted forms of gods and sages, of kings and councillors, of queens and attendants, embellished with personal charm and majesty, present to the eye the choicest expressions which spiritual reality can assume in stepping down from the divine to the human plane. It seems as if art subscribed to the ideal of *Anuttara-jñānāvāpti* so often declared as life's supreme goal in the written records of the age. Religion did not impede the free development of art which retained throughout its aesthetic and secular appeal. We find in the narrative paintings of Ajaṇṭā charming and delicate scenes from contemporary life inserted freely. Scenes of home and palace life depicting toilet and sports, festivities and processions have converted these paintings into a record of permanent value and beauty.

Another distinguishing feature of Gupta art is its simplicity of style, a felicity of expression by which great ideas take a concrete form in a natural and easy manner. The formal expression and the subjects of art were blended in a characteristic harmony. The outer form and the inner meaning are knit together like body and mind. In the words of Kālidāsa this fusion of the inner and the outer patterns was like the coalescence of Thought and Speech, natural and perfect as the union of Pārvatī and Parameśvara in the ideal form of Ardhanārīśvara. The concise formula of "knit like Word and Sense" (*Vāgarthāviva sampṛiktau*) represents the ideal of harmony and synthesis achieved in this period in many spheres of thought and life, and not the least in the domain of art.

The ideal of Gupta culture was harmony and synthesis. The householder's path of sensuous life and that of the recluse in rising above the senses to obtain a consciousness of the Divine were both honoured and the same found expression in the formula *Bhukti-mukti-prada*, [101] i. e. a way of life that is "true to the kindred points of heaven and home." Active participation in the affairs of the world and a release from their tension to acquire the serene repose of higher bliss, both were cultivated with an equal zest in the different stages of life. This attitude so widely reflected in literature and religion exercised a very

wholesome effect in the realm of art. On the one hand it invokes beauty with all its perfection of physical form and ornamental and decorative make-up, and, on the other, art pays full homage to the ideal of spiritual realisation as seen in the figures of Śiva, Vishṇu, Buddha, Bodhisattva, etc. All are representatives of the invisible divine principle which confers infinite richness, peace and bliss on human beings and is the only essential reality worth striving for to escape from the ups and downs of life. There is no doubt a perpetual session of beauty portrayed in the art of Gupta inspiration, but all that is dedicated to the spiritual ideal which is everywhere dominant. Art, dance, drama, music, literature—all are aspects of the goddess Sarasvatī, and should be designed to lift the mind to higher planes of consciousness where the individual merges itself into the pure realm of the Universal. This divine symbol is cast in the concrete form of the Gupta image enshrined in temples which was the eternal light approached within the interior of the *garbhagrihas* or the human hearts. Serenity, repose, calmness, joy, unruffled fixity of the mind, control over the objects of senses, perfect knowledge, compassion, discrimination and wisdom—these are some of the great principles of life and character which the divine images make manifest in the abiding charm of their visages which once seen can never be forgotten. Hundreds of such images and paintings are extant to proclaim firstly the aesthetic perfection and secondly the attainment of the highest spiritual vision for which art was dedicated.

The depth and purpose of Gupta art can be perceived in the religious and philosophical literature of the age, specially the Purāṇas, Pañcharātra Saṁhitās, Śaiva Āgamas, Sanskrit-Buddhist texts and the Jaina Āgamic commentaries. That task remains to be done, viz., the correct understanding of the ideals and symbolism of Gupta art in the light of contemporaneous statement. Art was not a fleeting stimulation but a perfect dedication to the ideal of life in which best of human action and thought are in harmony.

Gupta style earned the status of a truly national art evolved as the result of a synthesis perfected during centuries. It is the strength and the dominant position of this art at home that was the real secret of its inspiring vitality abroad. The honourable position which the Gupta art occupied in India infused it with such power and prestige as enabled

it to mould the art traditions of the rest of Asia. Transplanted in new environs beyond the borders of India with its inherent vigour and richness of contents this art brought into being the culture empire of Greater India whose immortal glories have been unearthed from the waterless deserts of Central Asia and the islands of the East. The convention of fresco painting especially found a congenial home towards Central Asia and China, and was received with enthusiasm by many foreign races which had come under the influence of Buddhism and which looked for inspiration to India in the matter of culture, religion and literature.

108. 'Yaduchyate Pārvati pāpavṛittaye na rūpam ityavyabhichāri tadvachaḥ' / *Kumārasambhava* V. 36.

109. Cf. *Brahma Purāṇa*, 27. 1; *Agni Purāṇa* 1.40, 2.4, 5.1, 202. 16, etc.

11

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Ill. 1. Part of a lintel showing a happy Janapada view in the Gupta period. The party consists of ten female figures engaged in dance and music. Except the dancing figure in the foreground all are seated on stuffed round cushions (*masūraka*). In the first row the woman on the left is playing on a guitar and that on the right a harp (*vīṇā*). In the second row the woman on the left is blowing a flute (*vaṁśī*) and that on the right is beating a little drum placed in her lap. In the *Amarakośa* (I. 7.5) reference is found to three kinds of *mṛidaṅgas*, viz., (1) *Aṅkya*, (2) *Āliṅgya* and (3) *Ūrdhvaka*. The small drum placed in the lap seems to be an Aṅkya. In the last row are five female figures. The one on the extreme left is only partly preserved. The next one is playing on cylindrical tom-toms having tapering ends placed upright. These appear to be of the Ūrdhvaka kind of *mṛidaṅga*. The third and the fourth figures are ringing cymbals (*kāṁsyatāla*). (Cf. my *The Deeds of Harsha*, p. 91.) The woman on the extreme left is holding a lotus flower (*līlā-kamala*); she appears to be the principal figure who is being entertained. In the words of Bāṇa the concert represents '*vīṇā-veṇu-muraja-manohara-antaḥpura-saṅgītaka*' (*Kādambarī*, sec. 50). The styles of hair-dressing are varied and gorgeous.

From Pawāyā, part of a big stone lintel, now in Gwālior Museum.

Ill. 2. Stone panel from the Brāhmanical Daśāvatāra temple at Devagaḍh. Nanda and Yaśodā are standing in their domestic retreat with four cows in the background, two seated and two standing. Nanda is holding Balarāma and Yaśodā is holding Kṛishṇa in her lap. Yaśodā is distinguished by her village costume consisting of a scarf on the head (*oḍhnī*), a long tunic (*cholī*) and a petticoat (*lanhgā*). This panel stands *in situ* as part of the original plinth round the temple.

Ill. 3. [Stone panel from the Daśāvatāra temple at Devagaḍh; one of the four pieces still *in situ* on the face of the terrace, this being the corner panel on the south face. The scene shows Lakshmaṇa mutilating Sūrpaṇakhā's nose and ears with his sword in the presence of his brother Rāma, seated with Sītā standing beside him. Sūrpaṇakhā is kneeling down on the ground with her hair grasped by Lakshmaṇa who brandishes his sword ready to punish her. The conventionalised foliage in the background indicates that the scene is laid in a forest.]

Ill. 4. Stone panel from Devagaḍh temple showing the Śakaṭa-līlā of Kṛishṇa. In the foreground child Kṛishṇa is lying on a *chaukī* with the upper half of his body raised a little. With his left foot he is kicking a little cart on which three jars have toppled over. In front stands the bewildered mother

Yaśodā with her right hand placed on the chin. The representation of Kṛishṇa episode among Devagaḍh sculptures was a new discovery by me and this panel provided the first clue to it.

Ills. 5-6. Two stone panels, showing female dancing groups; from the projections of the plinth, Devagaḍh temple. In both the groups the principal dancer is wearing a *svasthāna* trouser (cf. my *The Deeds of Harsha*, pp. 181-82).

Ill. 7. Standing corpulent male figure on the base of an octagonal shaft from Mathurā, inscribed with a dated record of Chandragupta II, in Gupta Year 61=A. D. 380. The nude male has been identified as Lakulīśa, the last incarnation of Śiva and promulgator of certain austere religious practices known as the *Pāśupata* or *Māheśvara yoga* preached by his pupils, who are referred to in the epigraph as 'Māheśvaras'. The finely dressed surface of the top of the shaft is sculptured with a trident (*triśūla*).

The figure is two-armed and dwarfish in bodily proportions; the right hand suspended holds a staff or club and the left is held akimbo with an indistinct object. The hair on the head is matted with some curls falling on shoulders. The upper part of the body is draped, the drapery being fastened by a band passing round the middle of the body (*vaksha-bandha*), with the ends flowing loose on left as in the case of some Gupta images in Udayagiri caves. No traces of drapery can at present be made out on the lower part of the body since the feet are lost and the figure is otherwise worn out. The conspicuous genitals suggest nudity. The forehead is marked with the vertical eye.

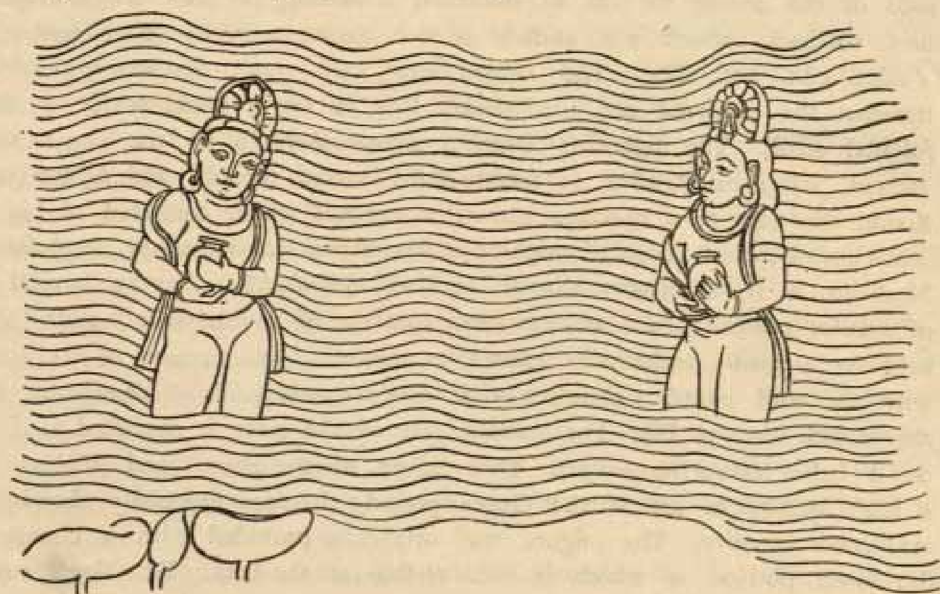
Ill. 8. Ekamukhī Śivaliṅga (6 ft. × 18 in.) distinguished by the one-faced human representation of Śiva. This style of Śivaliṅga was one of the special features of Gupta iconography, see Ills. 10-11. This specimen from the ruins of a Śiva temple at Khoh, in the former Nāgod State of Central India, is an excellent specimen showing the best spiritual traditions of Gupta art. Now preserved in the Allāhābad Municipal Museum.

Ill. 9. Mahānaṭa Śiva in the Tāṇḍava dance. This fragmentary sculpture of which only the upper portion of the bust is now preserved, is described in detail in the text, and was first published by me in *Lalit Kala*, No. 9, Fig. 5, p. 25. It is reported to have come from Nāchnā Kuṭhārā. Ht. 13 inches and breadth across the arms 18½ inches. In the Collection of Smt. Pupul Jayakar, New Delhi.

Ill. 10. Ekamukhī Śivaliṅga from the Uchāharā area. The glory of Gupta art is fully exemplified in this decidedly the best specimen of its class. It is described in the text and was first published by me in *Lalit Kala* along with *Ill.* 9. The height from base to top of the Liṅga is 38 inches and that of the head 10 inches. Now in the Collection of Smt. Pupul Jayakar.

Ill. 11. Ekamukhī Śivaliṅga, installed in the sanctum of the Gupta temple of Śiva at Bhūmarā. R. D. Banerji was the first to publish it (A. S. I. Memoirs No. 16, pl. XV). See my *Studies in Indian Art*, p. 229.

Ill. 12. The rock-cut Mahāvarāha image of colossal size, standing as a powerful human figure with a boar's head shown in profile engaged in the act of uplifting the goddess Earth from the ocean. It is carved in rock at Udayagiri near Bhilsā (Vidiśā) in the Vidiśā district of Madhya Pradesh. The adjoining cave has an inscription of the time of Chandragupta II dated in 401-2 A. D. and the Varāha sculpture most likely dates from about the same time. The goddess Pṛithivī is suspended from the right tusk of the Boar who supports her on his mighty left arm. The Mahāvarāha figure is extremely well-built and wears a long garland, which in the Gupta period was called *kiñjalkinī* and consisted of one thousand lotuses (*Devī-Māhātmya* 5.51; *Matsya Purāṇa* 247. 50). The god is standing with his left foot on the cosmic serpent Ananta which provided support to all the actors in the drama during the great upheaval. By his side is the figure of Garuḍa with an eagle's head holding a serpent in his hands. There are four rows of figures in the background representing gods and sages.



Textfig. 85. Detail from Mahāvarāha relief showing a royal figure and the personified Ocean.

There are interesting scenes carved on the two sides of the god showing identical theme of the Descent (*avataraṇa*) of the river-goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā from the heavens and their flowing to the sea. The relief carved on the left side of Varāha is better preserved and is given in Textfig. 6. This is exactly a picture of Antarvedi or Madhyadeśa, the homeland of the Gupta empire. The river-goddesses are depicted both in their natural form, first as two mighty streams taking their rise from the heavenly world, shown here with divine dance and music, and on the earth they again appear in a

human form, i. e. Gaṅgā standing on *makara* and Yamunā on *kachchhapa*, both holding in their right hand Full Vases (*pūrṇa-ghaṭa*). This is one of the happiest representations in Indian art pregnant with so much meaning. The composition on the right side of the niche is similar to this but the heavens are represented by the Devas alone, the Apsarases being omitted (see Cunningham, *A. S. R.*, vol. X, p. 48).

In the wide space below is depicted the primeval ocean (*ekārṇava*) in the form of high rippling waves. At one end stands a royal figure, who may be identified as the emperor Chandragupta himself; at the opposite end stands Bhagavān Samudra, Lord of the ocean, shown in human form and facing the king, both of them worshipping the mighty Varāha figure (see Textfig. 85).

Ill. 13. Image (ht. 3 ft. 7 in.) of a four-armed Vishṇu. The four arms parted from the elbows, the bifurcating lines being still preserved as well as a part of the back left hand. The elaborate crown is decorated with a crest showing a lion's face emitting pearl festoons (*siṁhāsyodgīrṇa-mauktika-jāla*). On the front side of the crown we see an ornament consisting of two alligator-heads set back to back, which was known as the *sīmanta-makarikā* (cf. *Kādambarī*, P. L. Vaidya edn., sec. 206). The *makara*-faces hold pearl festoons (*jālakābharaṇa*). Between the *makarikā* and the *sīmanta* line is set a jewel inside a deep-cut foliated scroll. The figure is wearing *nāgendra-kuṇḍalas* in the ear, a *vaijayantī* garland, *yajñīya-suvarṇa-sūtra* (a double-chain sacred thread), and *keyūras* (armlets). Round the neck is a necklace known as *ekāvalī* which consisted of big round pearls with a central elongated sapphire (*sthūlamadhyendranīla-muktāguṇa*, *Meghadūta* I. 46). Next to it is a crescent-shaped necklace (*chandrahāra*) having several strings of smaller pearls. The undergarment consists of a creased loin-cloth (*jāṅghika*) held by a girdle technically known as *netrasūtra* on account of its similarity with the cord round a churning-stick (*netra-sūtra-niveśa-śobhinā adharavāsasā*, *Harsha-charita*, NS. edn., p. 72). The middle part of the body is modelled as if turned on a lathe (*tanu-vritta-madhya*). This image of the great god Vishṇu reveals a high quality of art of the Gupta period, the face especially showing deep meditative serenity. The figure was originally provided with a circular halo, the lower portion of which is still visible at the back. Dr. Vogel suggested its identification with a Bodhisattva which must be abandoned. I am indebted to the late N. G. Majumdar, Superintendent, Indian Museum, who first drew my attention to it as a Vishṇu image while he was on his visit to Mathurā in 1933. Since then the image has been published by me in the "Coomaraswamy Volume" of *J. I. S. O. A.*, 1937 (p. 125) and elsewhere. Judging from its style the figure definitely belongs to the Gupta period and is to be considered a unique specimen of a Brāhmanical image of that age. Unfortunately its find-place is unknown and we cannot be certain about the locality of the monument in which this magnificent sculpture was once enshrined.

Mathurā Museum, No. E. 6 (now in the National Museum).

Ill. 14. Image of a Jina of colossal size (ht. 4 ft. 7 in.) seated cross-legged (*utthita-padmāsana*) in the attitude of meditation (*dhyāna-mudrā*) with both hands resting in the lap. The lower protion of both arms is broken as is also the upper portion of the elaborate halo, decorated with concentric bands of various designs. The nose is broken; the lips and elongated ears are slightly injured. The hair is arranged in short schematic curls turned to the right (*dakshiṇāvarta*). There is the *śrīvatsa* symbol in the centre of the chest. The palms of the hands and soles of the feet are marked with the symbol of the wheel.

From Mathurā, in the Mathurā Museum, No. B. 1.

Ill. 15. Stone head (ht. 2 ft. 4 in.) of a Jina image of colossal size. The surface is peeled off in places. The hair is arranged in schematic curls.

From Mathurā, in the Mathurā Museum, No. B. 61.

Ill. 16. Stone image of the Buddha, seated in *padmāsana*, from Maṅkuwār (Allāhābād Distt.). The image is dated in Gupta Year 129 (=A. D. 448-49) in the reign of the emperor Kumāragupta. The Buddha's head is shaven as in the Kushāṇa images; this being the only Gupta specimen of this type. But it is a beautiful figure true to the ideals that inspired the famous seated Buddha image of Sārnāth. Now in the Lucknow Museum.

Ill. 17. Statue (ht. 7 ft. 2¼ in.) of standing Buddha clad in a well-carved upper garment (*saṅghāṭī*) which covers both shoulders. Round the waist we notice the indication of a girdle which holds up the lower garment visible above the ankles. The right hand which is broken was raised in the attitude of protection (*abhayamudrā*). The left hand holds the hem of the upper garment. The hair, in agreement with the canon, is arranged in schematic little curls turned to the right. The protuberance on the top of the skull (*ushṇīsha*), a characteristic of the Buddhas, is clearly marked. But there is no trace of the mark on the forehead (*ūrṇā*), another sign of Bodhi. The nose and elongated ears are slightly injured. The head is adorned with a magnificently carved halo, circular in shape (diameter 3′), consisting of concentric, decorative bands of various designs.

The halo originally possessed a colour scheme which is only partially preserved. The central medallion in the form of a full-blown sixteen-petalled lotus had the smaller sepals coloured. The first band contains a garland held above and below by two addorsed alligator-heads, a *makarikā* ornament which was also coloured. The next band consisted of small rosettes painted in the centre. The third band was divided into six parts each separated by a lotus rosette and containing a conventionalised peacock or Garuḍa figure holding grape vine in its beak. Only the crest feathers of the Garuḍa and the vine creeper were painted. The last band was occupied by a garland interwoven with small rosettes which were painted. This was encircled by a beaded border and a segmented narrow fringe both of which do not show any traces of

paint. Although the colour has now become faint it supplies evidence to show that the elaborate halo in the images of the Gupta period was beautified by being tastefully painted.

At the feet of the statue we find two kneeling figurines, partly broken, which represent a couple of human worshippers, presumably the donors of the sculpture. The right one with *ekāṁsika* drapery appears to have been a monk, probably Yaśadinna himself. On the front of the base a Sanskrit inscription is cut, consisting of two lines in Gupta character of the fifth century :—

(*i*) *Deyadharmo' yaṁ śākya-bhiksho* (*r**) *Yaśadinnasya. Yadatra puṇyaṁ tadbhavatu mā-*
(*ii*) *tā-pittro āchāryopāddhyā* (*dhyā*) *yānāṁ cha sarva-satvā* (*ttvā*)*-nuttara-jñāna*(*nā*)*-vāptāye.*

"This is the pious gift of the Buddhist monk Yaśadinna. Whatsoever merit [there is] in this [gift], let it be for the attainment of supreme knowledge of [his] parents, teachers and preceptors and of all sentient beings."

The sculpture was found from the Jamālpur (or Jail) Mound, at Mathurā. Mathurā Museum, No. A. 5.

Ill. 18. Upper portion detail of the Buddha statue with richly embellished lotus-halo. The image is almost identical in detail to Ill. 17. For the full figure (ht. 7 ft. 2 in.) see J. Ph. Vogel, *La Sculpture de Mathurā*, pl. XXXI, fig. c. Of red sandstone, from Mathurā ; now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Ill. 19. Colossal stone head (ht. 1 ft. 8 in.) of Buddha. From Mathurā. Gupta Period. Now in the Mathurā Museum, No. 49.3510.

Ill. 20. Buddha image (ht. 2 ft. 4½ in.) of the Sārnāth school of Gupta sculpture shown in the attitude of preaching (*Vyākhyāna-mudrā*, or *Dharma-chakra-pravartana-mudrā*), seated in *padmāsana* on a *chaukī* with a high back. The elaborate halo is carved with a pair of celestial figures and conventionalised floral scroll-work of exquisite workmanship. The two *makara* heads in the corners between the halo and the back of the seat make up the *makarikā* design, and the two rampant leogryphs form the *Vyālaka-toraṇa* design. The figure seems to have been once installed in the Gandhakuṭī temple at Sārnāth.

In the Sārnāth Museum.

Ill. 21. Over life-size Buddha image in copper found at Sultānganj near Bhāgalpur, Bihār. Gracefully standing with right hand in *abhayamudrā* and wearing transparent drapery. This is one of the finest examples of the art of metal-casting as practised by the Gupta artists.

Now in the Birmingham Art Gallery.

Ill. 22. Standing figure of four-faced Brahmā, found from Mīrpur Khās, Sindh. Now in the Karāchī Museum. Ht. 3 ft. 7 in. It is of gilt bronze inlaid with copper, and is a remarkably good specimen of the art of metal-casting in this period.

Ill. 23. A marble image of Sūrya with his two attendants, seated on a chariot drawn by two horses. The full-boots, the round apron-like tunic and the general

decoration point to the image being carved under Sassanian influence. J. Hackin found it from the Sun temple at Khair Khāneh, about 16 miles north-west of Kabul in 1934. (See *Recherches Archéologique au Col de Khair Khaneh*, and also *J. of the Greater India Society*, vol. III, pp. 23-35.)

Ills. 24-25. Two views of a female stone head (ht. 1 ft.) with hair done in a high top-knot adorned with a heavy garland of flowers. The *sīmanta* portion in front is also decorated with an ornament similar to *ketakī-patra*. The discular earrings are of the *chakrī-śalākā* type. Belonging to a beautiful image of the Gupta period.

From Mathurā. Now in the Mathurā Museum, No. 261.

Ills. 26-27. Stone head of a life-size female figure, with elaborate head-dress and a large earring on the proper right side.

From Chāmuṇḍā-Maṭh at Āzampur Sarāi three milles from Mathurā on the road to Delhi. Gupta period. Ht. 1 ft. 2 in. Now in the Mathurā Museum, No. F. 33.

Ills. 28-29. Stone head of a female figure wearing ear-pendants and a high rolled up cylindrical turban. The lips are thin, nose pointed and eyes big. The features and head-dress suggest foreign ethnic features, probably Iranian.

From a Maṭha in Mathurā City. Gupta period. Ht. 1 ft. 3 in. Now in the Mathurā Museum, No. 1614.

Ill. 30. Terracotta plaque (15 in. × 9.7 in.) from Raṅg Mahal, showing three-faced Śiva seated on the Kailāsa with Pārvatī on his left. This Umā-Maheśvara group comprises an important document of the Pāśupata sect. Śiva has three faces in the plaque, but actually he is five-headed, of which two are missing in a frontal view. These heads symbolised the five elements, viz., Sky, Air, Fire, Water and Earth, of which full explanation is given in the Purāṇas, and their names were as follows : 1. Sadyojāta—Earth, so called as it is the youngest of the elements; 2. Vāmadeva—Water, so called as it represents the mother principle symbolised by water; 3. Aghora—Fire, in its peaceful aspect, the opposite of which was called Ghora or the Terrible One ; 4. Tat-purusha—Air, so called as it was the symbol *par excellence* of the Purusha or Life-principle; 5. Īśāna, Sky, so called as it was the subtlest of all the five elements, having the same nature as the Divine Being or Īśa.

In the plaque the central face with the third eye in the forehead and a top-knot of hair represents the Sadyojāta head, that on the proper right the Vāmadeva or the beautiful female head, and the one on the proper left the Aghora head of fire, which is of terrific aspect and generally so represented in sculptures. The two figures at the back of Śiva both floating in the sky, represent a pair of Vidyādharas showering flowers on the deity. The lower one seems to have been a male figure and the upper one a female in a sprawling position. Śiva is seated cross-legged with *ūrdhva-retas* feature, as common in the figures of Lakulīśa inspiration, and below him is the couchant Nandī bull. On Śiva's left is the blissful figure of divine Pārvatī seated with

stretched legs and wearing a long heavily folded skirt. Her bust is covered by a half-sleeved bodice (*kūrpāsaka*). The pair of devotees is shown on the two sides below, seated with flexed legs, the male on Śiva's right and the female on Pārvatī's left, each distinguished by his or her typical dress and ornaments. The male figure has a short bushy beard.

Now in the Bikāner Museum, No. 228.

Ill. 31. Terracotta showing Mahishāsuramardinī. From Kālibaṅgā.
Now in the Bīkāner Museum.

Ill. 32—Terracotta plaque (14.5 in. × 8.5 in.) showing Ajaikapāda. It is rather unique in the whole range of Indian iconography, showing a goat-headed two-armed figure of the god Aja-Ekapāda, wearing a *yajñopavīta*, the lower portion of his body being in the form of an elephant's leg. His Brāhmanical character is unmistakably indicated by the broad band of the scarf with a wavy pattern thrown from the left shoulder on the front portion of the body. This kind of scarf represented *yajñopavīta* in Gupta iconography. The right hand is broken, but the left one holds a leafy bowl of fruits or sweet balls. There is a clear sign of a *liṅga* on the lower portion of the body. The idea of *ekapāda* or one foot is depicted in the form of the massive elephant foot which balances the rather heavy upper portion.

From Raṅga Mahal, now in the Bikāner Museum, No. 324.

Ill. 33. Terracotta plaque (13.2 in. × 7 in.) from Sūratgaḍh, showing a two-armed male figure in standing posture. There is a halo round the head; the circular rim with knobs all round and the inner portion is filled with a series of conical ribs or spokes. The whole appears to depict a *chakra*, and this feature seems to indicate that he is Chakra-purusha. The iconographic form of Chakra-Purusha as given in the *Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā*, Pañcharātra Āgama text, is that of a normal human being (*manushya-rūpa-saṁsthāna*, *Ahir. S.*, p. 439), having two arms (*dvibhuja*), but also eight (*ashṭabhuja*), sixteen or thirtytwo arms (ibid., p. 440). In the present figure the number of arms is two only.

From Sūratgaḍh, now in the Bikāner Museum, No. 232.

Ill. 34. Terracotta plaque found at Mathurā from the bed of the river Yamunā in 1938, now deposited in the Mathurā Museum (No. 2795). This plaque represents a scene showing a woman pulling a scarf drawn round the neck of a male figure who on the basis of his quaint cap may be identified as a jester (*Vidūshaka*). It was one of the palace amusements (*antaḥpurikā-vinoda*) in which the inmates of the harem took part together with such male attendants as the jester, old chamberlain (*vriddha-kañchukī*) and the dwarfs, etc. A reference to this pastime is found in Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* in the description of the palace festivities at the time of the birth of prince Chandrāpīḍa. The panel has been fully described by me in a paper entitled "A Palace-amusement Scene on a terracotta panel from Mathurā" (*J. of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, 1942, vol. X, pp. 69-73).

Ill. 35. Fragmentary terracotta plaque from Kumrāhār, Patnā, showing the figure of a rake (*viṭa*) with his characteristic challenging look and vigorous expression. The description of a Viṭa given by Kshemendra (*Deśopadeśa* 5.16) tallies with the twisted up moustaches (*kiñchichchibukaśmaśru-veshṭana*) and upright hair on the head (*udañchitakacha*) of the figure. It was found from the Kumrāhār excavations conducted by A. S. Altekar.

Ill. 36. Terracotta plaque from Rājghāṭ showing a lady seated on a swing under an Aśoka tree (*aśoka-dolā*). The swinging lady is very similar to the figure of the lady Irandatī in the Ajaṇṭā paintings.

Ill. 37. Fragmentary terracotta showing lower portion of a four-armed Vishṇu, with two side emblems of Chakra and Gadā.

From Rājghāṭ. Now in the Central Asian Antiquities Museum, New Delhi.

Ill. 38. Terracotta figurine showing a standing lad wearing few ornaments and enjoying some eatable which he holds in his hand. From Rājghāṭ. 5th cent. A.D.

Ill. 39. Terracotta female head from Rājghāṭ with hair arranged in spiral curls known as *alakāvalī* style. The *alaka* coiffure is shown in the form of frizzled locks arranged on two sides of the central *keśavīthī* or parting. Women in the Gupta period had a particular fondness for this fashion of hair as Kālidāsa very often describes *alaka* to be the mark of a beautiful face. In *Raghuvaṁśa* VIII. 53, he speaks of the *alaka* hair of Indumatī as being *valībhṛita*, i. e., frizzled or twisted in short spirals. The *alaka* hair is explained as *chūrṇa-kuntala* showing that the female toilet experts or Prasādhikā women employed scented paste and powder in order to secure the effect of spiral twisting. In the description of Yakshiṇī living in separation from her husband, the poet styled her hair as *lambālaka* (*Meghadūta* II. 21), or hair loosely falling on her shoulders, implying thereby that the devoted wife had denied to herself the luxury of toilet. He repeats the same in *Meghadūta* II. 28, in speaking of the *alaka* hair falling on the cheeks.

Ill. 40. Terracotta head from Rājghāṭ showing a style of coiffure in which the right side shows matted locks and the left half shows spiral curls (*alakāvalī*). It may be regarded as a head of the Pārvatī-Parameśvara type combining the male and female forms of the deity.

Ill. 41. Terracotta from Rājghāṭ representing a singularly majestic head of Śiva (5 in. high) showing prominently the crescent, vertical eye and matted locks. This belongs to the best traditions of Gupta Śiva-liṅgas from Uchahara and Khoh.

Ill. 42. Terracotta male head from Rājghāṭ showing the *Chhatrākāra* hair style which crowns the head as a semi-circular parasol with locks arranged like ribs close to each other, all radiating from a top-knot (*śikhaṇḍa*). On the two sides the spiral locks (*alakāvalī*) descend in three receding horizontal tiers.

Ill. 43. Terracotta female head from Rājghāṭ showing hair arranged in sweeping curls like peacock's feathers on either side of the central parting, a specimen of the *barha-bhāra* style of coiffure.

Ill. 44. Terracotta head of Śiva with a mass of matted locks tied in a prominent and graceful top-knot. Found from the Ahichchhatrā terraced brick temple of Śiva. Now in the National Museum, New Delhi.

Ill. 45. Terracotta head of Pārvatī from Ahichchhatrā with the vertical third eye and crescent mark on the forehead. Her hair is beautifully arranged in spiral locks (*alakāvalī*), with braid fastened by a garland (*dhammilla*) and adorned by a floral boss (*chandraka*); round earring with *swastika* mark on it. This and the preceding head are two of the most charming specimens of Ahichchhatrā clay-figurines in the Gupta period, and most likely formed part of the decoration on the intermediate terrace of the lofty Śiva temple at Ahichchhatrā, which seems to have been inspired by the Pāśupata Śaiva teachers who made Ahichchhatrā their centre of activity in the Pañchāla region. Now in the National Museum, New Delhi.

Ill. 46. A group of Rājghāṭ clay-figurines, showing Gupta heads with several styles of coiffure.

Ill. 47. Close-up of the bust (partly repaired) of a life-size image of Yamunā, originally installed in a niche on one side of the main steps leading to the upper terrace of the Śiva temple at Ahichchhatrā. Now in the National Museum, New Delhi.

Ill. 48. Stucco figure (roughly 2 ft. in ht.) of a standing Nāginī from the Maṇiyār Maṭh at Rājgir (Rājagṛiha). It was fixed on the base of a circular structure of the Gupta period at this site which is now mostly destroyed.

Ill. 49. Gupta Śiva Temple at Darrā (also known as Mukundarā), near Koṭā, Mālwā.

Ill. 50. Carved ceiling of the Darrā temple.

Ill. 51. Buddhist shrine at Sānchī of early Gupta period, showing a sanctum or cella approached by a pillared proch (*maṇḍapa*).

Ill. 52. Daśāvatāra temple at Devagaḍh. Built on a raised terrace. The dilapidated core of its pyramidal tower and the arrangement of wall-niches with large sculptured panels can be noted.

Ill. 53. Doorframe of the Daśāvatāra temple at Devagaḍh. There are several bands depicting figures of Dvārapāla, Mithuna, foliated creepers, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, and a row of lion-faces. A very fine example of ornamental composition in Gupta temple architecture. A fuller description of the decoration on the jambs and the lintel is given in the text (pp. 73-4). In the right upper corner is the figure of Gaṅgā and in the left that of Yamunā. The representation of the river goddesses on the doorways of temples was a feature introduced for the first time in Gupta art.

Ill. 54. Doorframe of the Pārvatī temple at Nāchnā Nuṭhārā showing the river-goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā at the bottom of the jambs. Embellished with other characteristic motifs.



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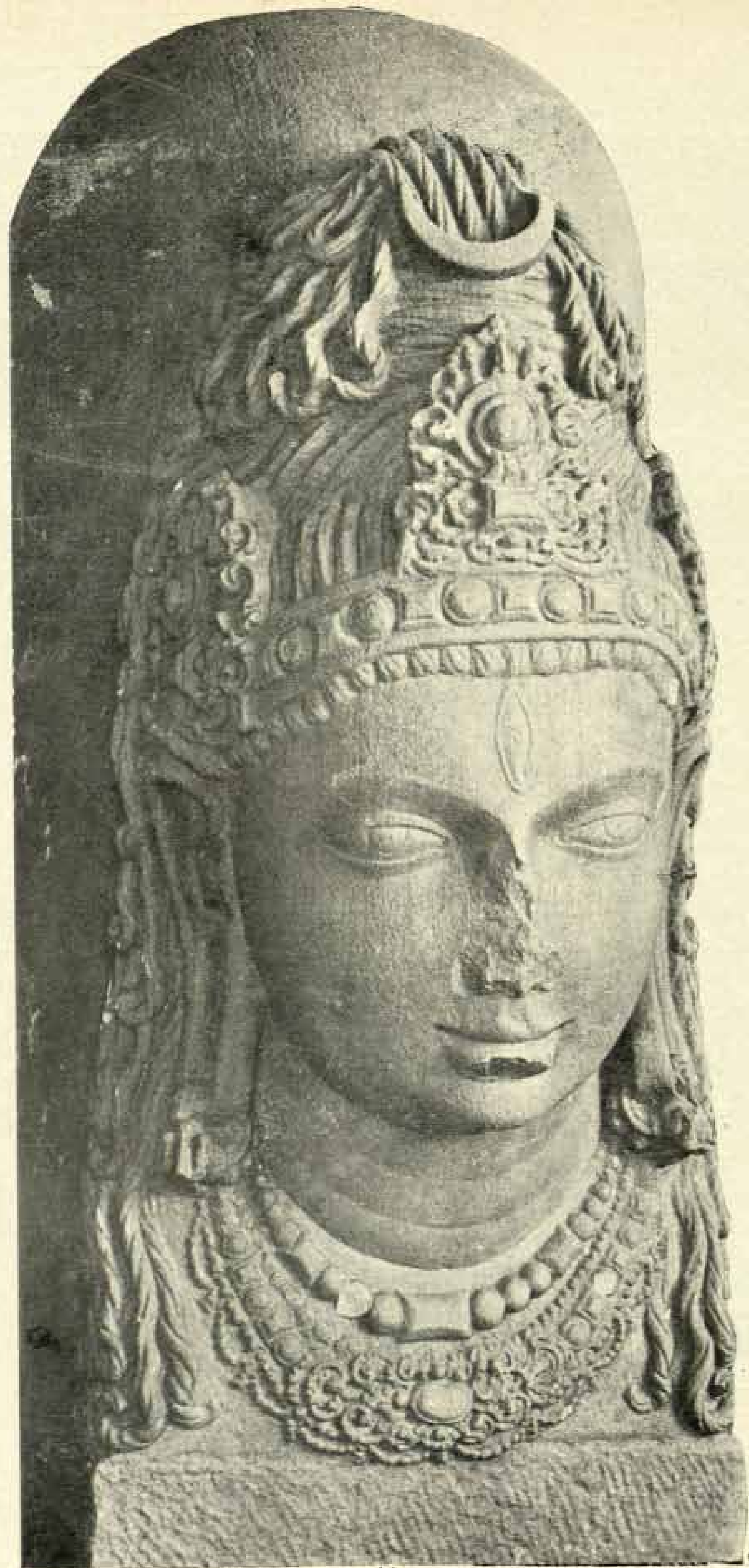
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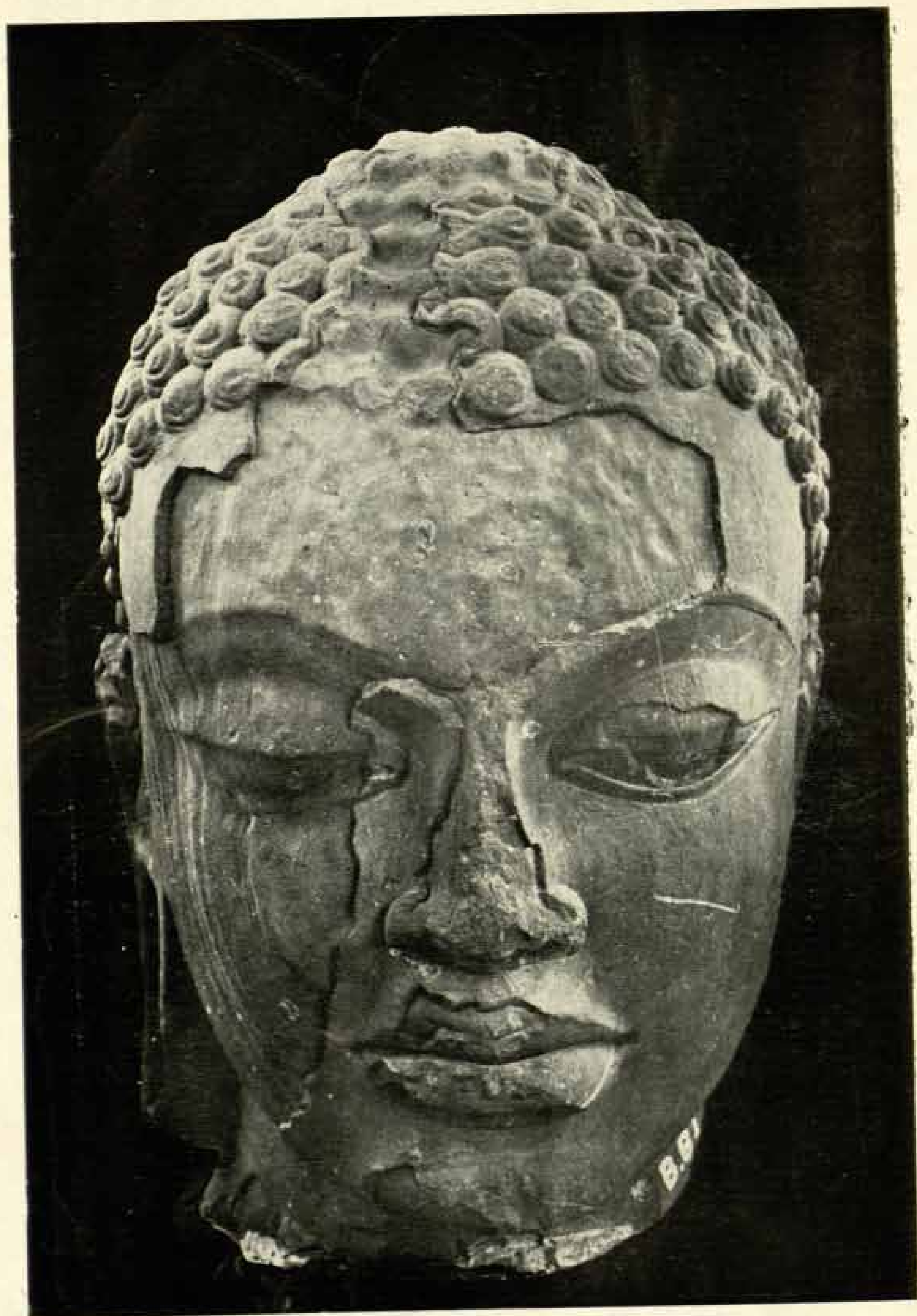
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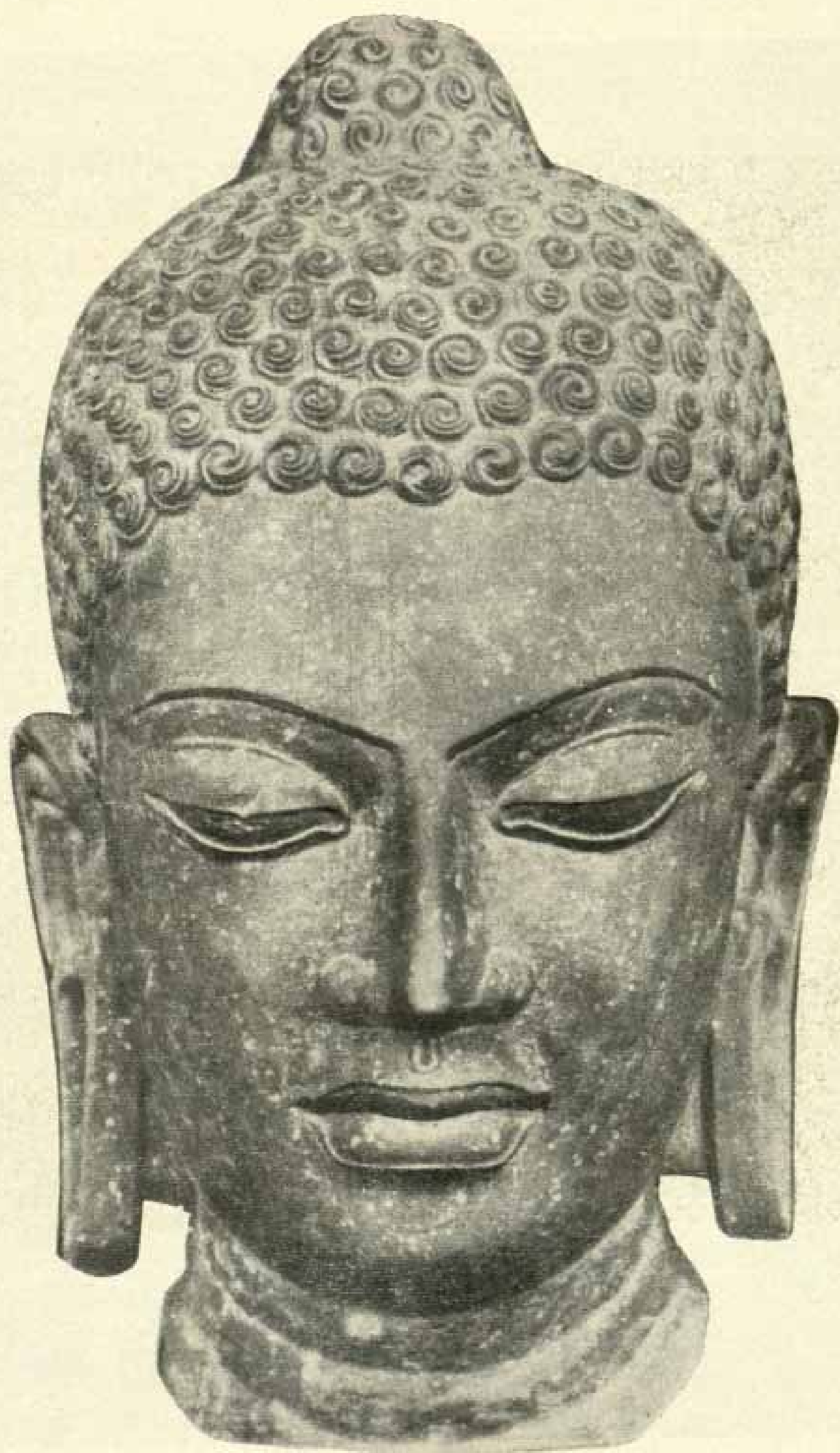

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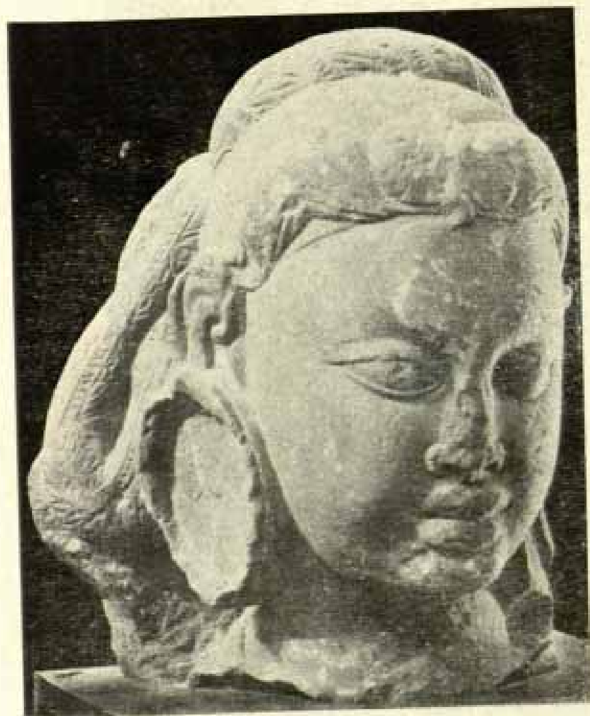




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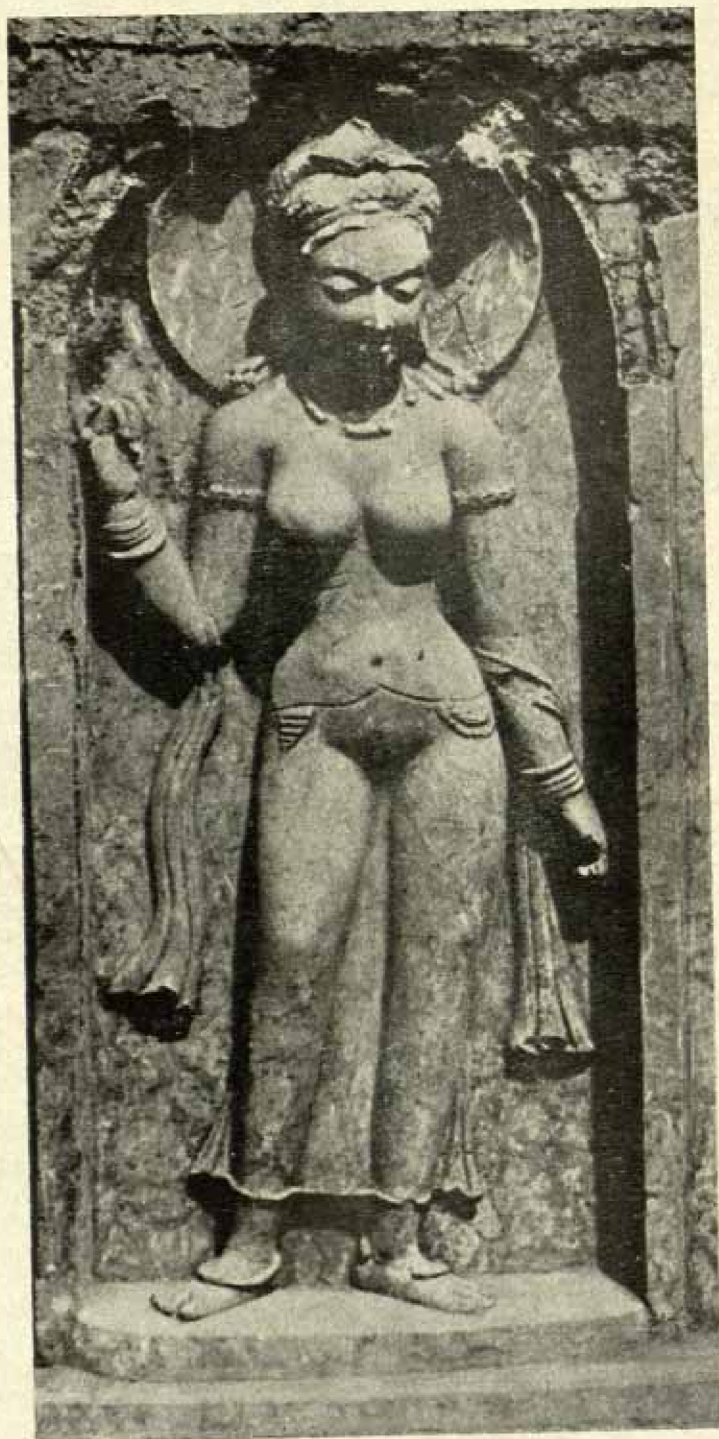
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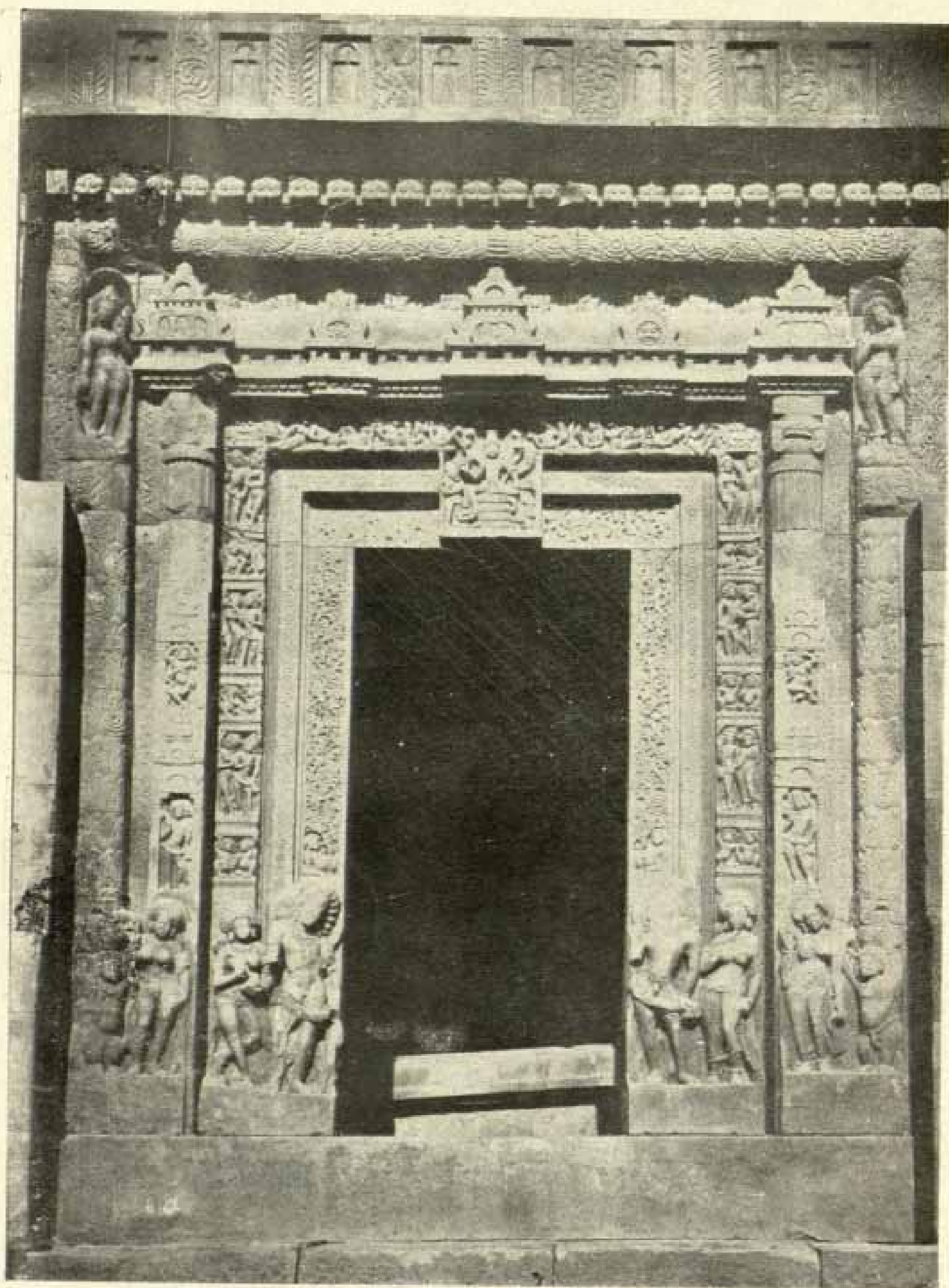


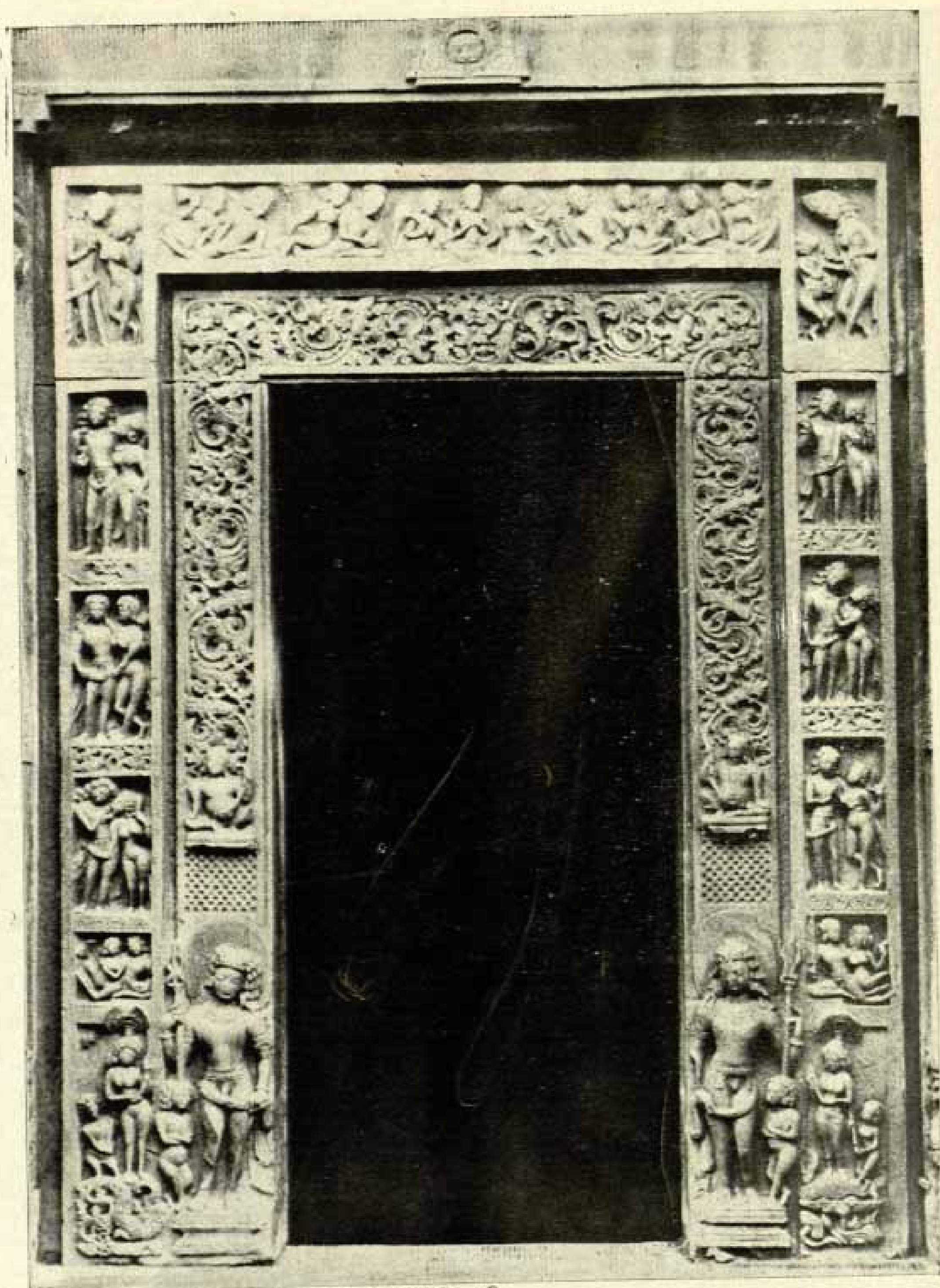
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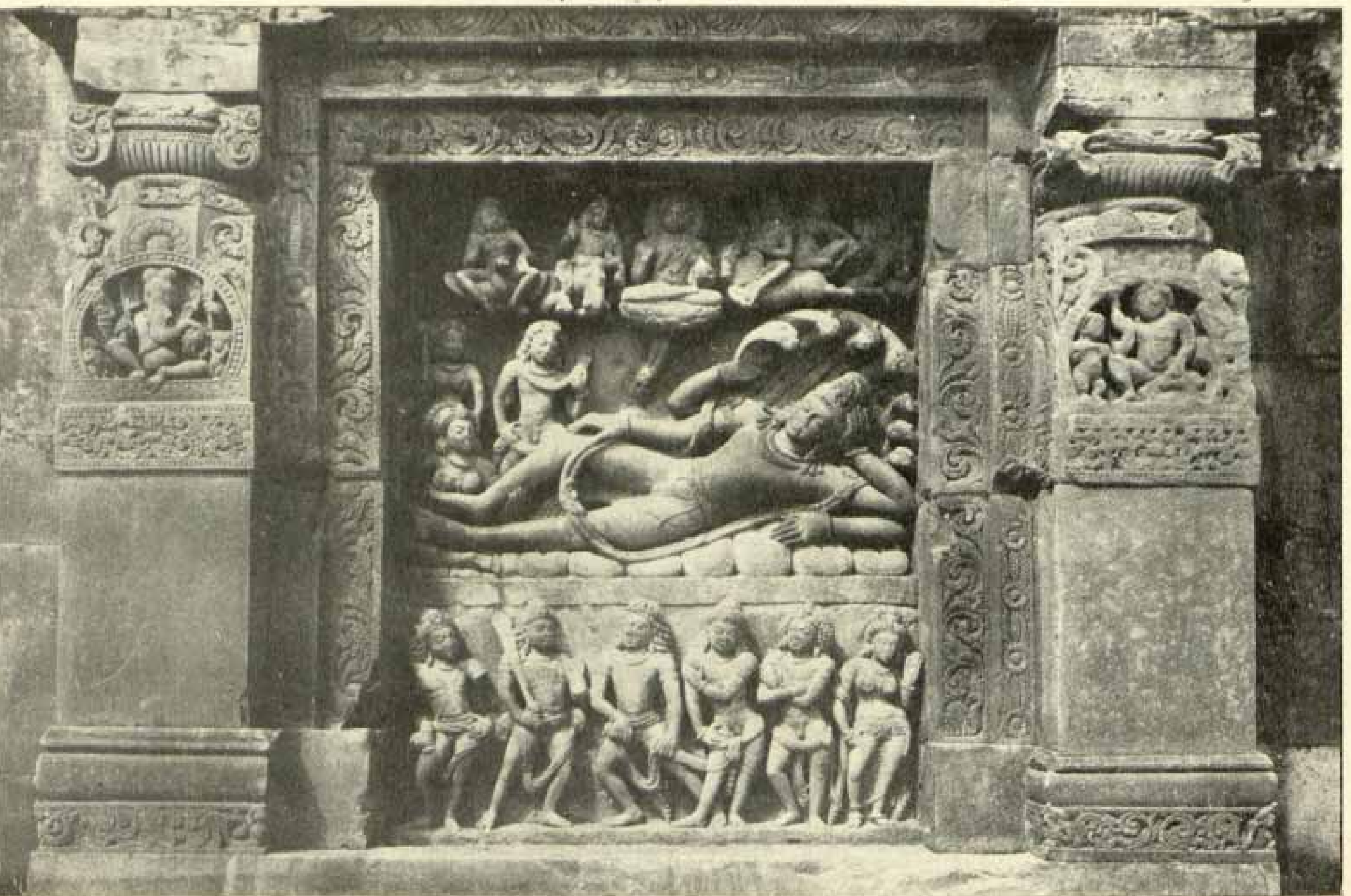
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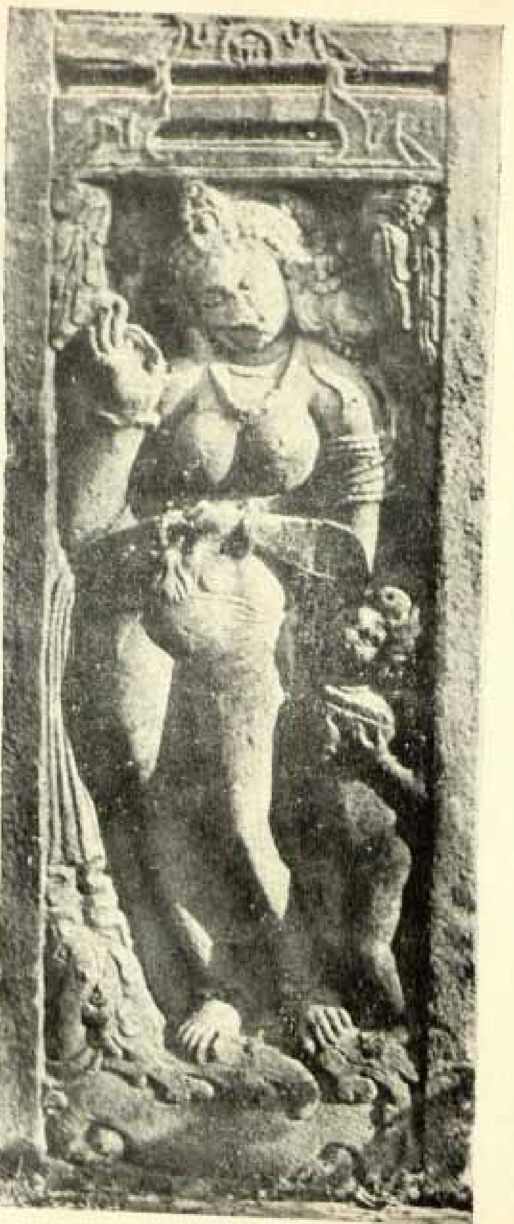




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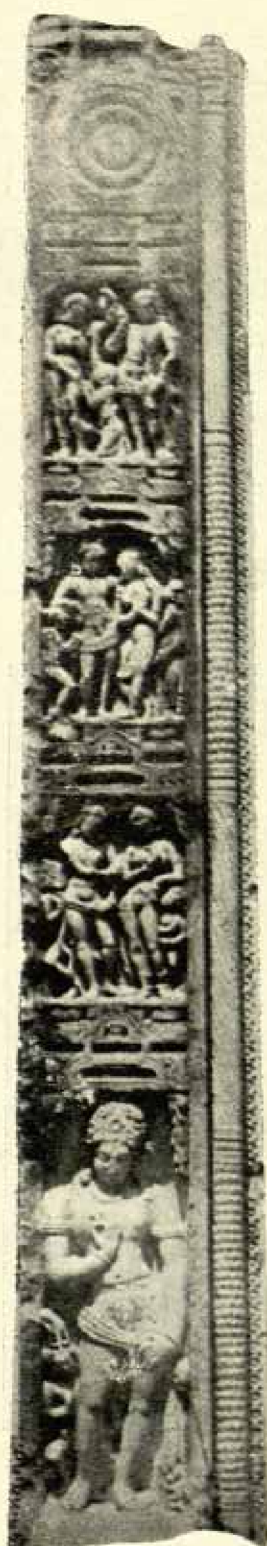
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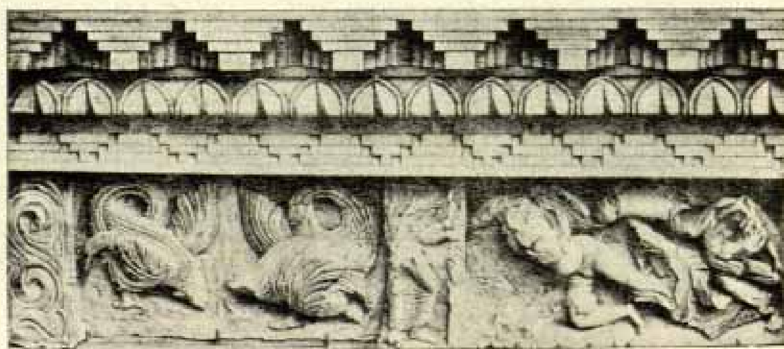
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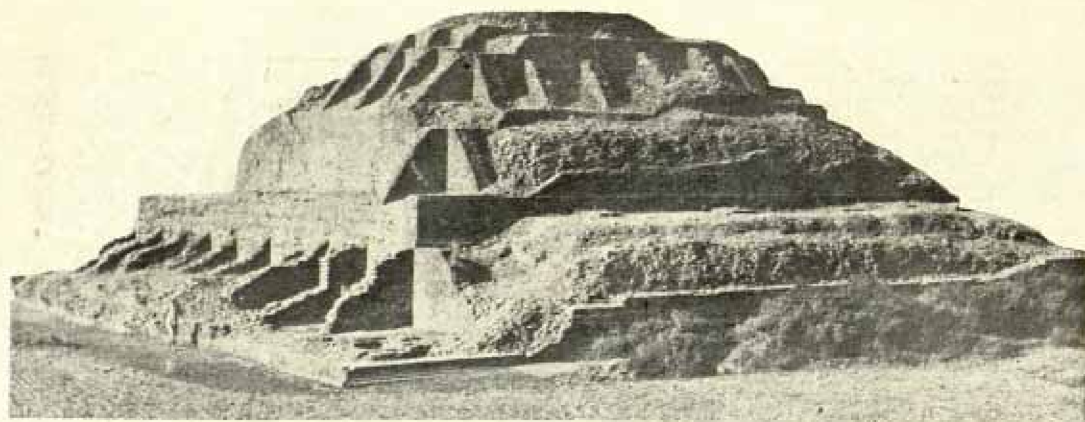
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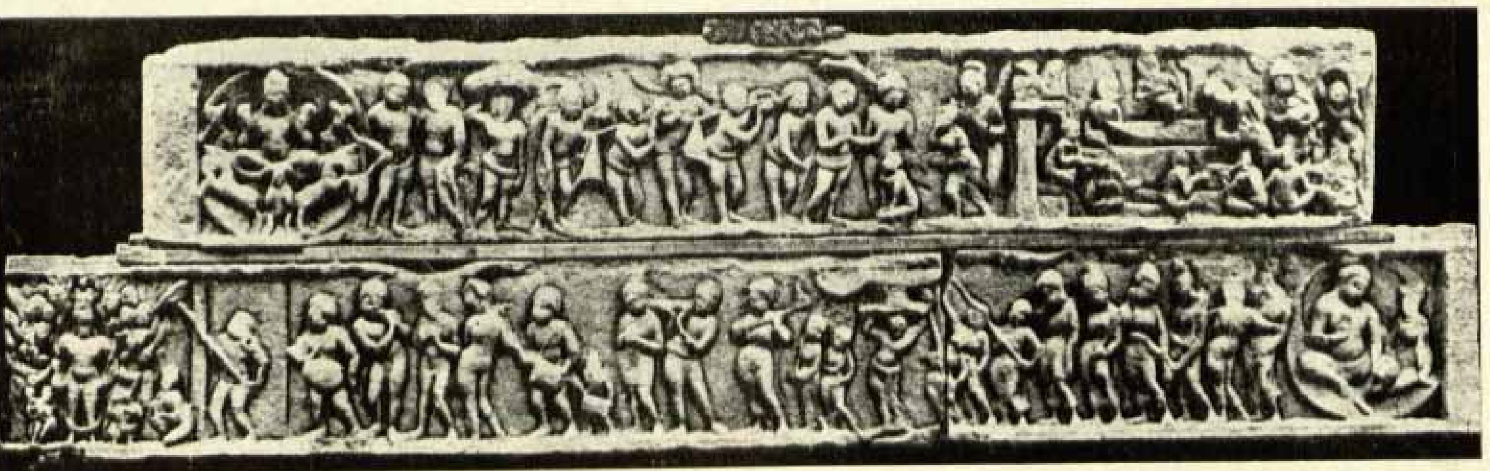
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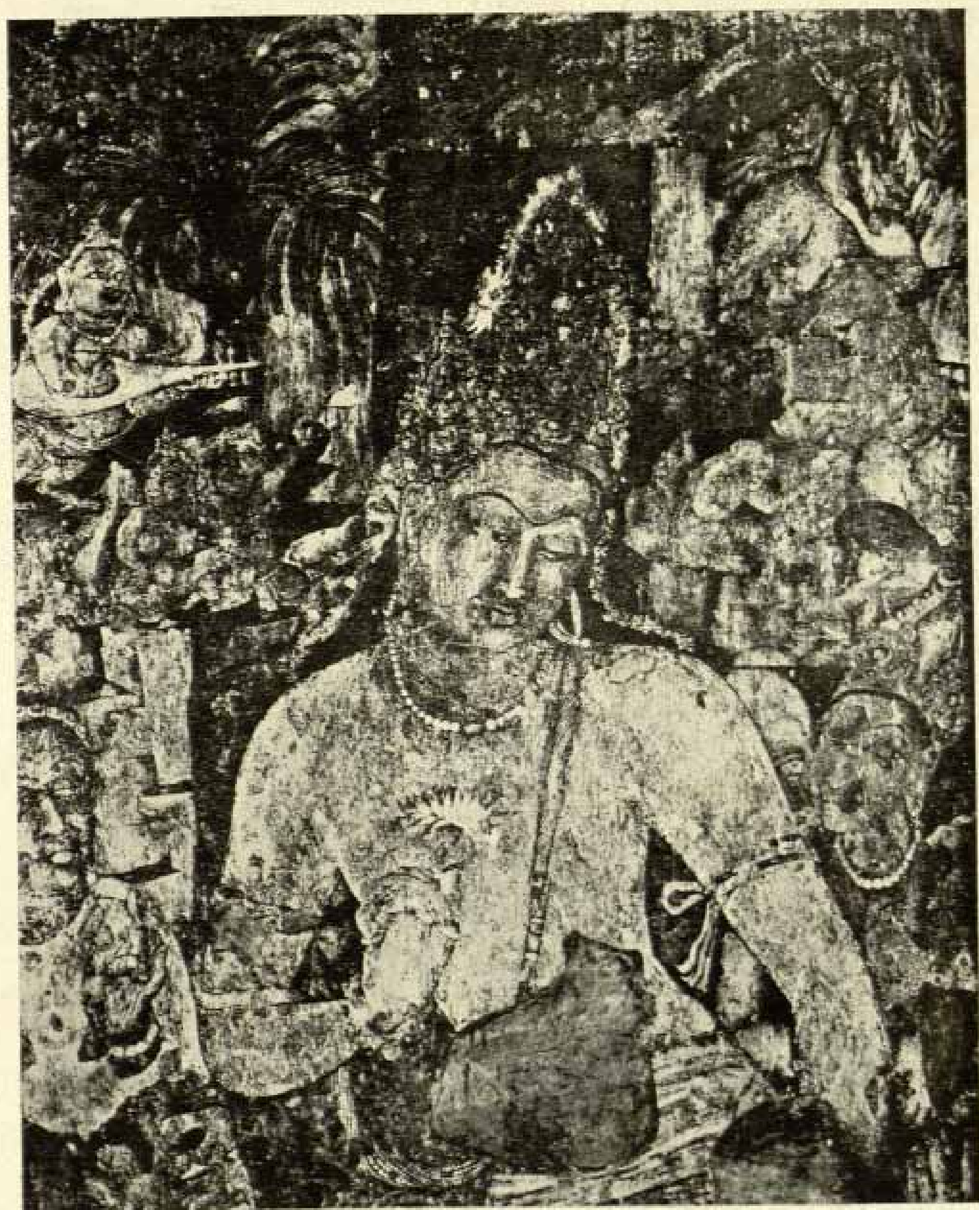


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Ill. 55. Sculptured panel (*rathikā-bimba*) fixed in the south wall of the Gupta temple at Devagaḍh showing Vishṇu resting on the cosmic serpent Ananta Śesha. Lakshmī is shampooing his right leg. Above, a row of divinities including Kārttikeya on peacock, Indra on elephant, Brahmā on lotus, and Śiva-Pārvatī on Nandī. Below, a row of five male warriors and a female figure, usually identified as the Five Pāṇḍava brothers with Draupadī; however, see p. 37. On the proper right jamb is Gaṇeśa and on the left Kubera.

Ill. 56. Close-up of the sculptured panel in the east wall from Devagaḍh as above, showing the sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa in their hermitage at Badarīnātha in the Himālayas. On the proper right is four-armed Nārāyaṇa and to his left two-armed Nara. In the lintel above is four-faced Brahmā seated on lotus between two pairs of flying celestials. There are two vertical bands on the jambs showing a conch with stylised scroll and a lotus garland on both sides.

Ill. 57. Panel in the north wall as above, showing Gajendramoksha. Vishṇu on Garuḍa is rescuing the lord of elephants from the clutches of a Nāga.

Ill. 58. Lower part of a detached stone door-jamb, showing Yamunā on tortoise, found from the temple ruins at Khilachīpur, Māndasor.

Ill. 59. Detached door-jamb or pilaster, showing Mithunas and a standing Pratīhārī, found from the temple ruins at Khilachīpur, Māndasor.

Ill. 60. Front view of the Brick temple of Vishṇu at Bhītargāon, as seen in 1880 by Cunningham (*A. S. R.*, vol. XI, pl. XV.)

Ill. 61. Terracotta moulded panel from the Bhītargāon temple showing Śeshaśāyī Vishṇu. Now in the Indian Museum. After Cunningham, *ibid.*, pl. XVII.

Ill. 62. Terracotta frieze with ornamental designs and human figures. Bhītargāon temple. After Cunningham, *ibid.*, pl. XVI.

Ill. 63. One of the terraced temples of brick at Ahichchhatrā (AC II).

Ill. 64. Part of the carved stone casing of the Dhamekha Stūpa at Sārnāth, showing a pleasing composition of foliated scroll designs.

Ill. 65. Lintel from Gaḍhwā (Dt. Allāhābād), now in the Lucknow Museum, depicting a scene from the *Mahābhārata*, viz., the fight between Bhīma and Jarāsandha in the presence of Kṛishṇa and Arjuna. In the background are the ladies of Jarāsandha's household.

Ill. 66. Colossal stone lintel from Gaḍhwā, now in the Lucknow Museum, showing the figures of Sūrya, Vishṇu and Chandra together with worshippers, hermits and a processional scene.

Ill. 67. Portion of a damaged doorframe from the temple at Gaḍhwā, showing several legendary scenes; the side pillar is carved with the motif of *Kalpalatā* or the Wish-fulfilling creeper with maidens springing from its tendrils. An ideal conception referred to in the *Jātakas* (Vol. IV, p. 352), *Rāmāyaṇa* (Kishkindhā, 43.48), *Mahābhārata* (Bhīshma Parva, VII. 9) and the Purāṇas (*Vāyupurāṇa* 45. 12-50). The Ayodhyākāṇḍa speaks of the divine damsels as fruits from trees (*divyanārīphalam*) in the garden of Kubera. See my article, "Kalpavṛiksha :

The Wish-fulfilling Tree," *J. of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, 1943, pp. 1-8; also *Indian Art*, pp. 142—46.

Ill. 68. Details of a jamb from the doorway of the Devagaḍh temple. It illustrates the deep cut foliated scroll work (*patralatā*). The creeper issues from the navel of a squatting Yaksha figure. The narrower band consists of a series of smaller rosettes called *phullāvalī*.

Ill. 69. Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara painted in Cave I at Ajaṇṭā. It is one of the best specimens of Indian painting illustrating the finest tradition of Gupta pictorial art. The Bodhisattva is wearing a single pearl string woven with a central bead of sapphire (*madhyendranīla-ekāvalī*). The rendering of the two eyebrows with a continuous stroke was also a noteworthy feature of Gupta art, referred to as *yugmabhrū*, i. e., the unified eyebrows.

Ill. 70. Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara painted in Cave IV at Bāgh, Dhār District. The illustration is based on a modern copy by Mr. S. Katchadourian now in the Gwālior Museum.

APPENDIX I

Devatārchana : Worshipping Images in Temples

The deep springs of aesthetic culture were touched in the Gupta times by developing the doctrine of temple building and worshipping divine images in them. This doctrine was named as '*bahirvedi devatāpūjana*'. Divine worship through Yajña was known as '*antarvedi*'. Since these various terms had a deep influence on the lives of the people their impress on the religious and art culture of the period should be clearly understood. Antarvedi is pure sacrifice both according to the Vedic or Śrauta and Smārta ritual. There was no diminution in these practices. The great Vedic sacrifices were still performed by kings and noblemen. We know from a number of inscriptions that the worship of deities through Yajñas was still a current practice in the Gupta times. The Purāṇas enjoin the performance of thrice seven kinds of Yajñas, viz., seven Pākasaṁsthas, seven Havirsaṁsthas and seven Somasaṁsthas. Pious householders considered it their sacred duty to complete the course of these Yajñas. This was known as the Antarvedi mode of worship. There was then another field of religious life in the form of *vrata*, *upavāsa*, *tīrtha*, *tapas* and *dāna* prescribed for the householder of which we have elaborate accounts in the Purāṇas. Spiritual Sādhanā through observance of vows and fastings, etc., was called Bahirvedi. These were mostly intended to secure personal merit besides the works of public utility[1] such as the planting of trees, groves (*udyāna*), digging of wells, making of stepped wells (*prapā*), resting places, plantations (*ārāma*), public roads, etc. in which the charitable citizen began to take interest from the Kushāṇa period onwards as testified to by numerous records. The word *ishṭāpūrta* in the language implied the many kinds of works of public utility. But in the religious development of the Gupta times a new mode of religious worship combined these two practices in the form of worshipping images in temples. It was believed that the fruits of Antarvedi and Bahirvedi were obtained by this new religious culture.

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1. bahirvedi tathaivoktamupavāsavratādikam /
ishṭāpūrtena labhyante ye lokāstān bubhūshatā //
Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa III. 1.3.

The religious consciousness of the people was working in expanding and deepening the orbits of Antarveḍi and Bahirvedi aspects and it reached its culmination in the new institution of temple building and worshipping the divine images installed in them[2] to the accompaniment of very elaborate religious rituals and domestic practices and festivities.

The author of the *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* has clearly stated that the fruits of merit both of sacrifices and of the other kinds of religious works called *ishṭāpūrta* can be secured by the building of temples and worshipping images.[3]

The building of a temple was no ordinary thing. It released a whirlpool of architectural activity which included the construction of sanctum (*garbhagṛiha*), pavilion (*maṇḍapa*), dancing hall (*nṛitya maṇḍapa*), spires (*śikhara*), plinth (*jagatī*), niches (*rathikā*), and other contingent mouldings that were considered to be the essential elements of building like cornice (*śukanāsikā*), sluices(*makaramukha-praṇāla*), etc. The Gupta temple began to evolve as the beautiful 'House of Gods' (*devālaya=devānām ālayaḥ*). The most beautiful part of the temple was its doorframe, furnished with vertical bands of several kinds, conceived as a charming frame of the divine abode of which the worshipper obtained a vision in some rare moment of divine meditation. The doorframes with there, five, seven or nine bands were considered praiseworthy. The vertical bands were loaded according to choice with the figures of attendants (*pratīhārī*) holding garlands or standing with *añjali-mudrā,* sticks of four-petalled flowers, rows of *pramatha* figures, of *dampatīs* or *mithunas,* flying geese (*māṅgalya-vihaga*), tree-of-life (*Śrīvṛiksha*), Svastika, *Patrāvalī* (scroll works), figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā and other decrorative motifs which together present a feast of beauty to the eyes. The Gupta doorframe leading into the *sanctum sanctorum* is beautiful like the goldsmith's work. The following verses from the *Bṛihatsaṁhitā* of Varāhamihira paint a vivid picture of an entrance to a Gupta shrine of which the few beautiful doorframe instances have survived at Dah Parbatiā, Devagaḍh, Bhūmarā, Nāchnā Kuṭhārā and Tigowā :

2. antarvedi bahirvedi purushеṇa vijānatā /
devatāpūjanaṁ kāryaṁ lokadvayamabhīpsatā //
Ibid., III. I.2.

3. 'devānāmālayaḥ kāryo dvayamapyatra dṛiśyate /
viśesheṇa kalau kāle kartavyaṁ devatāgṛiham //
Ibid. III. I.4.

adhaḥ śākhā chaturbhāge pratīhārau niveśayet /
śeshaṁ māṅgalyavihagaiḥ śrīvṛikshaiḥ svastikairghaṭaiḥ //
mithunaiḥ patravallībhiḥ pramathaiśchopaśobhayet // LVI. 14-15.

The temple and the divine image imparted a new leaven to the aesthetic culture and the cult of beauty in the Gupta age. It presented new moulds for architectural forms. It promoted the new science of the making of divine images or iconography. The *dhyāna* of the different gods and goddesses were fixed and are preserved on the literary side in the Purāṇas. For example, various images of Śiva are given in the Liṅga Purāṇa as were then installed in the Gupta temples. It is not accidental that some of the most beautiful art creations of the Gupta age are preserved as images of Śiva, Vishṇu and Buddha.

APPENDIX II

Music

One of the arts that enriched the life of the Gupta men and women in the highest degree was music. It was part of their general culture in royal palaces and aristocratic mansions and was also cultivated by common citizens and professionals. This art as a whole was known as *tauryatrika* (in which *taurya* is derived from *tūrya* denoting a musical instrument and *trika* means three) referring to the 'triple symphony' of song (*Gīta*), dance (*Nṛitya*) and instrumental music (*Vādya* or *Vāditra*). The four kinds of instruments were classified as (1) Stringed (*tata*), such as the lute (*vipañchī vīṇā*), (2) Bound (*naddha*), such as *muraja* or *mṛidaṅga*, (3) Striking (*ghana*), such as cymbals (*kāṁsyatāla*), and (4) Hollow or wind instruments (*sushira*), such as flute (*vaṁśī*).[1] Each one of them had many varieties and is depicted in bas-reliefs and paintings. The Vīṇā was also named as *Vallakī* and the old Indian lute of seven strings as *Prativādinī*. There were masters who played on these instruments, as it is described by Bāṇa with reference to the Palace of Kādambarī.[2] The Yakshiṇī of the *Meghadūta* used to divert herself with a song on the Vīṇa. A modest domestic performance was called '*antaḥpurasaṁgītaka*', which included the playing of lute, flute and small drums (*vīṇā-veṇu-muraja*). Such a performance was of course accompanied with dance (*vīṇāveṇumurajamanohara antaḥpura-saṁgītaka*).[3] The *muraja* had its general name *mṛidaṅga* and special name *pushkara*; its player being known as *mārdaṅgika*. It was a favourite high class instrument and it is stated in the *Divyāvadāna* that it was an invariable instrument played to keep company at meal times. In the Nāndī (i. e. benedictory prologue) of some

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1. The *Vaṁsatthappakāsinī* commentary of the Pāli *Mahāvaṁsa* explains *turiya* as of five kinds, viz., *ātata, vitata, ātatavitata, sushira* and *ghana*. Of these *paṇava* is said to be a stringed instrument (*tantribaddha*) classed under the category of *ātatavitata*.

2. See my *Kādambarī*, p. 65.

3. For 'Saṁgītaka', see my edn. of the *Chaturbhāṇī*, pp. 123, 141. See Ill. 1.

dramas sixteen *mṛidaṅgas* were played at one and the same time. Some of the finest clay-figurines depicting a tambourine player in strange ecstasy have been found at Rājghāṭ.[4] The *mṛidaṅga* or tambourine was of three types, viz., *aṅkya* having the shape of a *harītakī* fruit, *ūrdhvaka* having the form of the barley grain and *āliṅgyaka* which was in form tapering like the cow's tail and was a real *pakshavādya*.[5] The circle of Bāṇa's friends, who were experts in music, included a *mārdaṅgika* (tambourine player), *vāṁśika* (flute player), *dārdurika* (who played on *dardura*, a kind of pot instrument, *ghaṭavādya*) and *gāyaka* (vocalist).[6] The expert in dance was known as *lāsaka* or *nartaka* and the female dancer as *lāsikā* or *nartakī*. The art of *tāṇḍava* dance (see Ill. 9) was highly cultivated by the professionals called *tāṇḍavika*. It was essential to perform the *tāṇḍava* dance in Śiva temples on *parva* and festivals as mentioned by Kālidāsa for Mahākāla in Ujjayinī.

Among the wind instruments were the reed pipe, Gomukha (a kind of wind instrument blown with the mouth), Kāhala and Kāhalī (a trumpet-like instrument about 2 ft. long) and Śaṅkha (shell). Among those bound with skin were *pataha*[7], *guñjā* (a kind of drum or *ḍhakkā*)[8], *bherī* (kettle-drum), *ānaka* (a kind of drum), *dundubhi* (a kind of large kettle-drum), *śārṅga* (a kind of musical instrument made of horn), *diṁḍima-ghoshaṇā-pataha* (a drum for proclamation with great noise), *nāndī* (a modest-sized drum). The *paṇava* was a kind of stringed instrument (*'ātatavitataṁ nāma tantribaddha paṇavādi'*, Buddhaghosha).

The Nārada-saṁgitā had come from olden times. But the fact is that in the Gupta age the ancient Nāradīya Saṁgīta was replaced by the new music of Rāgas and Raginīs. In the *Bṛihatkathāślokasaṁgraha* (XVII. 4-6) there is a bitter invective against Nāradīya music. Its teacher a Vīṇā-chārya is spoken of as of coarse voice (*khara-svara*), ignorant in the knowledge of Śruti and Svara (ibid., XVII. 5), and incapable of distin-

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4. See my "Rajghat Terracottas," J.I.S.O.A., Vol. IX, 1941, fig. 2.
5. See my *The Deeds of Harsha*, p. 91. Kālidāsa also referred to a'l three of them together (*Kumāra.*, XI. 36).
6. See my *The Deeds of Harsha*, p. 35.
7. Also *yaśaḥ-paṭaha* (a kind of heavy drum), *āghoshaṇā-paṭaha* (a drum sounded as war music), *prasthānamaṅgala-paṭaha* (a drum sounded to mark a lucky journey).
8. *The Deeds of Harsha*, p. 171.

guishing Nishāda and Shaḍja (XVII. 20). Many of the Rāgas and Rāgiṇīs as listed in the *Bṛihaddeśī* of Mataṅga were admitted into musical modes as local tunes of great charm.[9] It was an important innovation in the history of Indian music and it appears from the statement in the above passage of the *Bṛihatkathāślokasaṁgraha* that the people's reaction was all in favour of the new musical modes in preference to the Nāradīya Saṁgīta, which has been made there the object of ridicule.

The antiquity of the Rāgas in Indian music is still an open question. Bāṇa (early seventh century) refers to 'women singing the Rāsaka compositions',[10] and to the various Gītis and Rāgas associated with them.[11] This may be taken to be a definite evidence in support of Rāga music having come into existence in the seventh century A. D. He also mentions a Gīti based on the Dhruvā or Dhruvapada.[12] In the *Kādambarī*, it is stated that the Gīti was composed on the basis of Dhruvapada (*dhruvapratibaddhā*), accompanied with Tāla (*aneka-kṛita-tālā*) and permeated by *Bhāvanā* (*aneka-bhāvanānuviddhā*) or models, and sung to the accompaniment of a lute.[13] Bāṇa is here referring in general terms to the Rāgas and the Gītis based on them. He does not mention any specific Rāga by name. But another well known prose-writer, viz., Subandhu, who flourished about a century earlier than Bāṇa refers to a Rāga by name, which is the earliest mention of a Rāga in the extant classical Sanskrit literature besides perhaps Kālidāsa in *Kumārasambhava* VII. 85.[14] In his prose-romance called *Vāsavadattā* (c. 6 th century A. D.) there is a definite reference to Vibhāsa Rāga being sung by the Kārpaṭika minstrels who selected the themes of their songs from works of poetry and romance.[15] The *kārpaṭika-jana* were palace musicians who had been especially honoured by the king granting them the privilege of wearing a

9. V. S. Agrawala, *Bṛihatkathāślokasaṁgraha—A Study*, Varanasi, 1974, p. 323.

10. 'Gītāya iva rāgamuddīpayantyaḥ', *Harshacharita*, Nirṇayasāgar edn., p. 132; 'aho rāgaparivāhiṇī gītiḥ,' *Śākuntala*, act V.

11. 'Rāsakapadāni gāyantyaḥ', *Harshacharita*, p. 132; see my *The Deeds of Harsha*, p. 92.

12. 'Gītaya iva rāgamuddīpayantyaḥ'.

13. *Harshacharita*, p. 20.

14. 'prāptakaṇṭhayogāya gītyā devaṁ virūpākshamupavīṇayantīm', *Kādambarī*, Vaidya edn., p. 131.

15. 'Vibhāsarāgamukhara-kārpaṭikajanopagīyamānakāvyakathāsu', Jīvānand edn., p. 22.

fillet or ribbon (*karpaṭa*) round their headdress.[16] If the Vibhāsa Rāga was known in the sixth century A. D. it cannot be an isolated phenomenon, but points to a system of musical composition comprising the principal Indian Rāgas. Surely there had been an outburst of musical activity in the time of the Gupta emperors, Samudragupta himself being the greatest patron of this cultural efflorescence as shown by his lyrist type of coins. It may reasonably be claimed that as a result of this devotion to Gāndharva Vidyā, it was in the Gupta period that the system of the Indian Rāgas was evolved for the first time. Since then up to the eighteenth century the family of the Rāgas and their Rāgiṇīs continued to be endlessly elaborated.

It is further noteworthy that the development of Rāgas, i. e. *Deśī Rāgas* was a feature that coincides with the Apabhraṁśa movement in language; Kālidāsa gives the earliest specimen of Apabhraṁśa in the *Vikramorvaśīya* and also the earliest reference to a Rāga if in *Kumārasambhava* VIII. 85 we have the mention of Kaiśika Rāga. Special features of musical modes were the compositions known as Dhruvās. They were sung on the stage and were of five types, viz. 1. *Prāveśikī*, marking the entrance from the stage, 2. *Naishkrāmikī*, marking the exit, 3. *Ākshepakī*, 4. *Āntarā* and 5. *Prāsādikī* illustrating the sentiments of the actors. These were mostly in Prākrit or Apabhraṁśa.[17] The musical voice was planned in low, middle and high tones, called *mandra*, *madhya* and *tāra* respectively.

The art of dancing was popularly cultivated and members of the royal household took interest in it. Kālidāsa has given the picture of the dance-masters like Gaṇadāsa who took special classes in the terpsichorean art and trained such pupils as their patrons the king and the queen desired.[18] Indeed, the performance of dance for worshipping a deity in the temple was considered as an act of high merit. A queen took a vow that she would give a performance of dancing before the deity in a public temple when a son was born to her. She kept her vow.[19] This shows the high regard in which this art was held. Madanotsava, i. e.

16. Also see my *The Deeds of Harsha*, p. 160.
17. Those in Sanskrit followed at a later stage.
18. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, act II.
19. *Purāṇa* (?)

the festival held in honour of Kāmadeva in the spring season or whenever it was announced was considered as a special occasion for dance performance. There was the institution of Vāravilāsinī women whose principal duty was to demonstrate dancing in royal courts and palaces. The king was the representative of Indra and the royal court, of Indra's court. The session of the royal *sabhā* began with the dance of the Vāravilāsinī women who represented the Apsarases of heaven. As soon as the king took his seat on the throne these worldly Apsarases, who stepped forward from their respective positions and moved ahead to offer their obeisance to the king and then back to their respective positions showing their art in a number of movements of the eyes, hands, fingers, breasts, waist and feet in an increasing tempo relieved the stolid atomosphere of the court.[20] The styles of dancing were classified as fourfold, viz., 1. *Kaiśikī*, i. e. mode of the Kaiśika country or Berār, 2. *Bhāratī*, of the Bharata Janapada or Kurupāñchāla, 3. Sātvatī, of the Saurāshṭra Janapada, and 4. Ārabhaṭī, of the Ārabhaṭa country or the wild areas of Sindh and Baluchistan.

20. See my *The Deeds of Harsha*, pp. 64-6, 91.

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